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Shaking Hammīra

Playfulness and Tragedy in a Sanskrit Historical Epic

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Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift biedt een herwaardering van Nayacandra Sūri's meesterwerk, *Hammīramahākāvya* (HMK), het "Grote Dichtwerk over Hammīra". Dit Sanskriet epos uit het begin van de vijftiende eeuw vertelt het beroemde verhaal van de krijgerkoning Hammīra Chauhan van Ranthambhor (r.1283–1301) en zijn nederlaag in de strijd met Alauddin Khalji, sultan van Delhi (r. 1296–1316). HMK maakt deel uit van een mogelijk bredere literaire stroming van historische poëzie, die recent veel belangstelling heeft gewekt, voornamelijk bij historici. HMK wordt meestal selectief gelezen, vanuit een historiografische optiek, om inzicht te krijgen in premoderne representaties van de controversiële en lang genegeerde Delhi Sultanaat-periode (1206-1555). Echter, als literatuur of poëzie – waardig om onderzocht te worden als een esthetisch object - blijft HMK ondergewaardeerd. Dit is zo voor de meeste historische poëzie, die veel 'gebruikt' wordt, maar niet echt wordt gelezen. Het resultaat is dat ons begrip van de Zuid-Aziatische historische poëzie - de individuele gedichten, evenals de literair-historische betekenis ervan als een zeer populair literair genre - erg beperkt blijft. We weten in feite niet goed waar complexe gedichten als HMK eigenlijk over gaan, en *hoe* ze historische 'werkelijkheid' representeren. Dit proefschrift daagt momenteel dominante sociaal-politieke analyses uit, die vaak neigen om historische poëzie te classificeren - en impliciet te devalueren - als politieke lofdichten, gesponsord door de elite om hun waarden te promoten en hun aanspraken op macht te onderschrijven. Deze studie toont het belang aan om het speelse, subversieve en innovatieve karakter van HMK te erkennen. Ik doe dit door een grondige literaire analyse van Nayacandra's Sanskriet epos als geheel, gepaard met een nauwkeurige situering van dit werk in zijn historische context: het hof van Gwalior onder de Tomar koning Vīrama (1402-1423).

Luisteren naar speelsheid - en heroïsche Sanskriet poëzie verstaan *als* spel – betekent aandacht hebben voor verschillende poëtische en narratieve effecten en technieken: doelgerichte dissonanties tussen het gepretendeerde opzet en de tragische, vaak anti-heroïsche inhoud; intertekstueel spel; ironie; parodie; hoorbare stiltes; subversieve knipogen naar het politieke heden; meta-poëtische en -historische vervreemdingstechnieken; doelgerichte inversies van bestaande narratieve modellen; de

structurerende functie van complexe poëtische beelden en symbolische personages; het verweven en verdichten van meta-poëtische, intertekstuele, thematische en religieus-filosofische niveaus, enz. In mijn lezing van HMK breng ik dergelijke literaire aspecten aan het licht, met als doel om een belangrijke nuance te brengen aan recente socio-politieke lezingen die de complexiteit van historische poëzie afvlakken. Daarnaast zoekt deze studie komaf te maken met oude Oriëntalistische, en nog steeds gangbare ideeën over de zogenaamd statische, oncreatieve en fantasieloze aard van 'middeleeuwse' Sanskriet poëzie.

Naast een herwaardering van HMK's esthetische kwaliteiten, onderzoekt dit proefschrift de grote literaire aantrekkingskracht van de Hammīra-legende zelf, en de nauwelijks erkende invloed op latere tragisch-historische literatuur in lokale talen. Nayacandra's Sanskriet epos is de vroegst overgeleverde versie van deze legende. Deze studie belicht de culturele en literair-historische betekenis van de verhalen over Hammīra 'De Stoute', een van de meest populaire historische helden was van het premoderne Noord-India, die in de historische poëzie wordt voorgesteld als een bijzonder tegenstrijdige figuur. De herinnering aan Hammīra - en zijn hele legende – bezielt een zeer groot deel van de heldencultuur van Noord-India, tot op vandaag. Dit proefschrift toont aan dat HMK de heroïsche grondslagen van de beroemde Hammīra-legende op speelse wijze doorheen schudt – een belangrijk motief doorheen dit epos. De schone schijn van heldhaftigheid wordt meesterlijk ontluisterd en uitgehold, en de tragische zinloosheid van oorlog, machtspolitiek en heldendaden wordt subtiel blootgelegd in al haar contradicties.

Summary

This dissertation offers a reappraisal of Nayacandra Sūri's masterpiece, *Hammīramahākāvya* (HMK), the "Great Poem of Hammīra". This early fifteenth century Sanskrit epic retells the story of the warrior-king Hammīra Chauhan of Ranthambhor (r.1283–1301) and his defeat at the hands of Alauddin Khalji, Sultan of Delhi (r. 1296–1316). HMK is part of a potentially wider movement of historical poetry, which has attracted considerable interest in the past decades, mostly from historians invested in reevaluating premodern representations of the controversial and long-ignored Delhi Sultanate period (1206-1555). However, as literature or poetry, worthy of interest in its own right, HMK is highly undervalued. This is also the case for many other specimens of historical poetry, which remain largely unread. The result is that our understanding of South Asian historical poetry – the individual poems, as well as its literary-historical significance as a popular literary genre – is very limited. We don't know what complex poems like HMK 'actually say', and *how* they represent historical realities. This dissertation challenges the currently prevalent socio-political mode of analysis, which tends to classify – and devalue – historically themed poems as political eulogies, sponsored by elites to promote their values and underwrite claims to power. This study stresses the importance of taking seriously HMK's deeply playful, subversive and innovative character. I do this through a close literary reading of HMK against the backdrop of its context of composition in early-fifteenth century Gwalior, while exploring the text's relation to earlier and later trends of historical and non-historical literature.

Listening for playfulness - and understanding poetry *as* play - means looking beyond surface layers. It means paying attention to various poetic and narrative effects and techniques: purposeful dissonances between eulogistic format and tragic content; audible silences; intertextual games; ironic cues; parodic effects; subversive nods to the political present; meta-poetic/historic distancing techniques; meaningful inversions of narrative templates and historical memories; the structuring function of complex poetic imagery and symbolic characters; the repeated intertwining of meta-poetic, intertextual, thematic, and religious-philosophical levels, etc. By doing justice to such literary features this study not only hopes to bring important nuances to recent historiographical analysis

of HMK, it also challenges still prevalent Orientalist ideas about the supposedly static, uncreative and unimaginative nature of 'medieval' Sanskrit poetry: those many Sanskrit poems composed in what Sheldon Pollock famously called the 'vernacular millennium'.

Apart from offering a more sympathetic understanding of HMK's aesthetic goals, this dissertation explores the great literary appeal of the Hammīra legend itself, and its barely acknowledged influence on later 'chivalric' Rajput literature. I highlight the cultural- and literary-historical significance of the many stories about Hammīra 'the Bold' (*haṭha*), who became one of the most popular historical heroes of premodern North India. The spirit of the Rajput king Hammīra – and the template of his story – animates much of Northern India's Rajput culture, which continues to be instrumentalized in present-day India to underwrite political agendas. This dissertation demonstrates that one of the first full-fledged literary expressions of the Hammīra legend playfully shakes the heroic foundations of this popular story. HMK's author deliberately debunks and hollows out the eulogistic frame, while exposing the tragic futility of war, power politics, and hero-worship in all its inner contradictions.

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Introduction: the charms and challenges of reading pre-modern historical poetry

Poeisis, in fact, is a play-function. It proceeds within the play-ground of the mind, in a world of its own which the mind creates for it. There things have a very different physiognomy from the one they wear in "ordinary life", and are bound by ties other than those of logic and causality. If a serious statement be defined as one that may be made in terms of waking life, poetry will never rise to the level of seriousness.

Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens* (2016 [1938]), p.119

What is the use of the poet's poetry
and what the use of the archer's arrow
when it enters the other's heart
but does not make his head shake?

Nayacandra Sūri's *Rambhāmañjarī*, 1.38[1]

[1] kiṃ kaves tasya kāvyena kiṃ kāṇḍena dhanuṣmataḥ |
parasya hṛdaye lagnaṃ na ghūrṇayati yac chiraḥ ||38||
The verse plays on the dual meaning of *para* as "another" and "enemy". (Sanskrit text quoted from the edition of Poddar 1976: 29)

1.1 Historical *kāvya*, what is it?

This study offers a first close literary reading and contextualization of a fascinating Sanskrit epic or 'great poem' (*mahākāvya*), *Hammīra-mahākāvya,* "The Great Poem of Hammīra". It deals with the famous story of king Hammīra, the last Chauhan ruler of the hillfort of Ranthambhor (r.1283-1301) who met his death at the hands of the Delhi Sultan Alauddin Khalji (r. 1296–1316). The poem was composed in the early fifteenth century by the Jain poet and monk Nayacandra Sūri, who may have been the first poet – but not the last – to render the story of Hammīra into a great, epic poem.

Nayacandra's *Hammīra-mahākāvya* (henceforth HMK) is a relatively well-known, much-cited but poorly understood specimen of the understudied South Asian genre of 'historical' poetry (*kāvya*). Broadly speaking, this classification is used to refer to highly ornate and complex literary works – mostly epics (*mahākāvya*) and plays (*nāṭaka*) - having historical personae and events as its subject matter. Although only a few examples survive from the first millennium CE – 'the early days' of Sanskrit *kāvya* - the composition of historical poetry became a much-preferred literary choice from the eleventh century onwards, extending well into the Mughal and colonial period.

For historians in modern times these historical poems have provided, and continue to provide, a useful counter-perspective to the Indo-Persian historiographical traditions of South Asia. Many generations of scholars understood the Persian chronicles to be more 'historiographical' in a Western sense, which were therefore deemed more valuable and useful for 'doing history' than their more poetic and less 'serious' counterparts in Indian languages. In recent decades more nuanced approaches to what history is, or can be, has drawn new attention to many historical poems and other genres of historical literature, composed in Sanskrit and vernacular languages. Many of these works are now read to address all sorts of historiographical and theoretical questions pertaining to changing historical sensibilities, premodern historiography itself, the representation of pre-modern 'Hindu-Muslim' encounters, cross-cultural dialogues in the confrontation with ethnic and cultural 'others', shifting historical memories, historical 'textures' in various genres of historiographical literature, etc.[2]

[2] For the memory approach, see the important recent work of Cynthia Talbot (2016) on Pṛthvīrāja Chauhan, and that of Ramya Sreenivasan (2007) on the story of the Rajput queen Padmāvatī. For two important books that critique earlier Orientalist claims about the absence of historical writing in Indian languages and genres, see Romila Thapar's "The Past Before Us" (2013) on North Indian historiographical traditions and Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam's influential "Textures of Time" (2001) on history writing in South India, and the ensuing discussion in the journal *History and Theory* that resulted in their "pragmatic response" (2007). See Talbot (2012), Busch (2012) and Truschke (2012) for three notable articles on historical

This historiographical and theoretical outlook also means that the many historical epics and plays have been predominantly 'used' to say something about historical realities external to the text, rather than valued as aesthetic practices, with important exceptions.[3] Of course, this approach is not problematic in itself. Quite the contrary, I believe it is very important to 'use' these texts for historiographical purposes and offer fresh looks on the past, while employing new interpretative frameworks that allow us to look beyond the paradigms of 'more serious' Western or Indo-Persianate historiography. The problem is that very few historical poems have actually been read as literature or poetry, worth reading from beginning to end, with attention to their distinct poetic characters, literary effects and aesthetic goals. The result is that we don't really know what many of these remarkably complex historical poems are actually 'about', what they try to say or do beyond their surface meaning, or beyond the historical realties and memories they reflect (and distort). The deep literary complexities which are inherent to the genre of *kāvya* - also of the historical kind – are often ignored in recent historiographically oriented and socio-politically textured readings of historical poems like HMK. In short, despite the growing interest in premodern forms of historical literature, the many historical *kāvyas* in Sanskrit remain undervalued as literature or poetry, for reasons I will further examine below.

This study intends to show that Nayacandra's *mahākāvya* or 'great poem' of Hammīra is truly great, not only as a remarkably innovative work of Sanskrit historical poetry, but also for its cultural-historical significance as the first - or at least earliest extant - fully-fledged epic rendering of the story of Hammīra. Like the influential literary trajectory of his (in)famous predecessor Pṛthvīrāja, the story of Hammīra's heroic struggle had sparked the imagination of poets, bards, story-tellers and painters who turned him into one of the most famous historical heroes of North India, a tragic, admired but also profoundly ambiguous historical 'model'.[4] The story of Hammīra the 'courageous' (*sattva*)

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poems in Indian languages, providing a counter-perspective to Mughal historiography and addressing the topic of cross-cultural dialogues. For a recent overview on various genres of historical writing in South Asia, and the theoretical issues surrounding it, see Daud Ali (2012).

[3] A noteworthy exception is the book "Textures of Time" (2001) mentioned in the previous note, and the work of Allison Busch, put together in her book "Poetry of Kings" (2011) about vernacular courtly poetry in the early-modern period. In addition, worthy of mention is a special issue on the historical poetry of the Kashmirian poet Bilhaṇa (Bronner 2010; McCrea 2010; and Cox 2010) and the *Rājataraṅginī* tradition pioneered by Kalhaṇa, (Bronner 2013; McCrea 2013; Ali 2013; and Obrock 2013). For a recent reappraisal of Kalhaṇa's *Rājataraṅginī* as a whole, see the book-length study of Shonaleeka Kaul (2018).

[4] For the most complete list of fully-fledged renderings of the Hammīra tale, see Sandesara's note (1965:362-3) on Amṛtakalaśa's *Hammīra-prabandha* (1518 CE), an "unnoticed māru-gurjara poem eulogising the exploits of Hammīra". He mentions ten works composed between the fifteenth and mid-nineteenth century, some of which also remain unnoticed and await edition.

and later the 'obstinate' (*haṭha*) had a formative – but barely acknowledged – influence on what we now classify as 'Rajput literature': tragic-historical narratives from Sultanate and Mughal period India, which *ostensibly* glorify a warrior-ethos of heroic resistance and self-sacrifice.[5] This dissertation seeks to nuance this picture by offering a novel reading of HMK, one of the earliest 'Rajput epics'.

Broadly speaking this dissertation revolves around two major goals. First of all, I seek to demonstrate that HMK, the great poem of Hammīra, is an intriguingly complex, subversive and innovative work of Sanskrit literature. It is composed by a daringly bold author who infuses his poem with sharp critical edges, playful twists and an extraordinary intertextual depth. With important exceptions, the historical court epic continues to be predominantly read, interpreted and classified - and implicitly denounced - as 'heroic poetry' (*vīra kāvya*) and political propaganda, 'idealizing' literature, composed to promote and underwrite elite interests. As such, its function and raison d'être are often too easily put on pair with the genre of inscriptional praise poetry (*praśasti*).[6] (Yet, in this genre too subversive and legitimizing functions co-exists simultaneously, as shown in a fascinating cross-cultural study and reappraisal of the genre by Rebecca Gould, who has aptly called it the "much-maligned panegyric.")[7] If we stretch this view on courtly poetry too far, or selectively focus on functionalistic or instrumentalist approaches to literature, the poet risks being reduced to a mere

[5] Rajput literature's concern with praising, promoting and idealizing a warrior-culture of heroic self-sacrifice, is central in the work of Janet Kamphorst (her PhD thesis *"In Praise of Death"* 2008), the work of Michael Bednar (his PhD thesis "Conquest and Resistance in context: a historiographical reading of Sanskrit and Persian Battle Narratives" (2007)), the work on Pṛthvīrāja by Cynthia Talbot (*The Last Hindu Emperor* (2016)), the work of Ramya Sreenivasan in a number of articles on Rajput poems, including HMK (as in "Alauddin Khalji Remembered: Conquest, Gender and Community in Medieval Rajput Narratives" (2002)) and in a recent book by Aparna Kapadia (*In Praise of Kings: Rajputs, Sultans and Poets in Fifteenth-century Gujarat* (2018)).

[6] As for example in Siegfried Lienhard's evaluation of Sanskrit historical poetry in his "A History of Classical poetry" (1984). Judging this body of literature against the models of western historiography, Lienhard states that they "made no attempt to study their sources critically or to do any other historical research" (216). He denies these works the notion 'critically', explaining that: "As it was the poet's intention to say nothing but good of his protector and to prophesy auspicious things for him, as in *praśasti*s, eulogies on kings, ministers, etc., truth and fiction are mingled quite uncritically. It was not in the author's interest to build his work on the basis of historical or geographical material; his main object was rather to compose something that was effective poetically and would earn him the approval of his master and the critics." (p. 216)

[7] Gould 2015, in an article titled "The Much-Maligned Panegyric: toward a political poetics of premodern literary form". It compares panegyric genres in both Sanskrit, Chinese, Arabic and Persian traditions, demonstrating how "the panegyric's structure counter-intuitively subverts a patronage-based economy by glorifying poetry while ostensibly enacting the patron's elevation, as well as by maximizing the rhetorical powers of the tropes of discursive indirection, double entendre, and self-referentiality" (p. 255).

instrument of power.[8] We may overlook other important questions about what this poetry is 'really about', or what it is also about, and what the poet does beyond telling stories about the 'glorious deeds' of heroes and kings. Even though HMK can be broadly classified as 'heroic poetry' (*vīra kāvya*), the author doesn't grant anyone fulsome praise – not the heroes, and not his patron. Put differently, it may be more prudent to read HMK as a 'great poem', a *mahākāvya,* rather than a 'heroic poem' (*vīra kāvya*). I return to this point below, drawing on methodological observations by Lawrence McCrea in an article on one of the great poems of Sanskrit literature.

Secondly, this dissertation seeks to give insight into the cultural-historical import of the Hammīra story itself, which was of great significance for the chivalric Rajput culture and literature of North India. Not only do references to "bold" (*haṭha*) Hammīra turn up in many narratives about Rajput kings, I would argue that his story itself provided the narrative template for many other – initially - less heroic 'forgotten heroes' who were also defeated by Alauddin Khalji.[9] It thus seems that well-known, influential vernacular poems like Padmanābha's *Kānhaḍade-prabandha* (1455), about the Chauhan ruler of Jalor, and Malik Muhammad Jayasi's *Padmāvat*, about the Guhila ruler Ratansen of Chittor, were purposefully modelled after the Hammīra legend. Even though a lengthy comparison with such poems is beyond the scope of this dissertation, I will occasionally draw attention to intriguing parallels. It is hoped that a better understanding of the Hammīra story may also elucidate what these other, later texts are about and how they took shape. In addition, my close reading of HMK may also shed new light on the literary-historical significance and impact of earlier genres from which it emerged. For example, reading a historical poem like HMK means understanding how it both follows and plays with the conventions of the *mahākāvya* genre. Without a good understanding of the aesthetic goals of this genre, it becomes difficult to make sense of *how* the story of Hammīra is told in Nayacandra's great poem.

Before further placing the present study in its broader research context, I want to start this introduction by briefly getting the 'basic' facts straight. HMK narrates the story of the last ruler of the famous Śākambharī branch of Chauhans. With its tragic plot this epic stands out from the history of Sanskrit poetry (*kāvya*), and thus appears to have paved the way for many later tragic-historical poems, in vernacular languages. The poem was

[8] It is difficult to prove or disprove whether a particular poem or genre comes into existence (and is preserved) *because of* socio-political processes and needs, like the upward mobilization of rivalling warrior Rajput clans who sponsored 'heroic poetry'. It may be more prudent to say that their courts provided the locus of poetic compositions (and competitions). A poem like HMK indeed arises *in a context* where patron-kings sought to legitimize claims to power, but it may be highly critical of this context itself.

[9] For example, in Amrit Rai's *Mancarit* (1585) who laments that "bold Hammīra" (*haṭhī haṃvīra*) is gone, quoted from Busch (2012: 312). Hammīra's story is also referred to in Jayasi's famous *Padmāvat* (1540) and clearly influenced its plot, as noted in Behl (2002: 206). I discuss the oft-neglected but influential literary trajectory of the Hammīra story as a running theme throughout this dissertation.

composed more than a century after the events, by the Jain poet-monk Nayacandra Sūri. At the end of his Hammīra poem, he 'explains' that his Sanskrit composition was the result of a literary contest at the (recently established) court of king Vīrama Tomar, who ruled the kingdom of Gwalior from 1402 to 1423. (I present a close reading of this often-overlooked verse in the first chapter – it is here where Nayacandra playfully states that he was 'shaken' into making his new poem of Hammīra). This means that HMK was composed shortly after the turbulent turn to the fifteenth century, in the wake of Timur's (Tamerlane) sack of Delhi (1398). This landmark historical event shook the foundations of the Delhi Sultanate, creating opportunities for local chiefs – both Muslims and Hindus – like the Tomars to revolt and carve out independent kingdoms.[10]

Nayacandra's great poem (*mahākāvya*) of Hammīra is literally great (*mahā*) or epic in scope in the sense that it covers, in fourteen cantos (ca. 1500 verses), the entire history of the Chauhans of Śākambharī, from its mythological founder up to the death of Hammīra, and his continued remembrance in the present. In addition to the story of Hammīra, Nayacandra's Sanskrit epic, arguably the first fully-fledged *literary* reworking of his famous legend, also contains the first tragic-heroic rendering of the story of Hammīra's (in)famous predecessor Pṛthvīrāja Chauhan (1177-1192).[11] This historical king is popularly known as the last independent 'Hindu Emperor' of Delhi, whose various literary trajectories and various 'remembrances' between the year 1200 and 2000 have been recently studied by Cynthia Talbot in her book *The Last Hindu Emperor* (2016).[12] The

[10] HMK thus took shape in the context of the radically changed socio-political environment of Northern India after the (in)famous Timur left Delhi in ruins - and continued his military campaigns westwards where he would shake the political foundations of the Ottoman empire in the battle of Ankara (1402). Worthy of note is that modern historians now regard the Timurid campaigns as landmark historical events marking the transition to the 'early-modern' period, in which the Eurasian world was becoming increasingly connected, as discussed in Sanjay Subrahmanyam important essay "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia" (1997). See the recent edited volume *After Timur left: Culture and Circulation in Fifteenth-century North India* (2014) for a number of good articles on significant changes in North Indian literary culture.

[11] This point is also made in Cynthia Talbot's work, who notes that the "*idea* of Prithviraj as a tragic hero" (2016: 68) appears to emerge around the fourteenth and fifteenth century, as seen in a poem like HMK. There is of course Jayānaka's biographical epic *Pṛthvīrājavijaya* "The victory of Pṛthvīrāja" (ca. 1192-3), which was composed during Pṛthvīrāja's reign itself. But since it is composed as a patron-centred epic it doesn't qualify as a later heroic transformation of Pṛthvīrāja's tragic fate. The thirteenth and fourteenth century *prabandha* narratives clearly do not cast Pṛthvīrāja as a man worthy of the label 'tragic hero'.

[12] Her work discusses Pṛthvīrāja as a 'site of memory', whose story signified something different in different memory communities, changing over time. She draws attention to the fact that India's controversial 'heroic past' is still very much alive, or purposefully kept alive. In recent times historical kings like Pṛthvīrāja have thus been re-modelled and appropriated as national heroes, symbolizing 'Hindu India's' admirable resistance to the 'Muslim invader'. There is an upcoming Bollywood movie *Prithviraj* (release date November 2020), which is likely going to reinforce this problematic rhetoric of othering.

entrance of Pṛthvīrāja as a tragic hero in Nayacandra's epic, may support my take on the pioneering role of HMK in transforming these historical kings into full-fledged *literary* heroes. In this regard it is worth noting, briefly, that Nayacandra also composed a 'historical play' called *Rambhāmañjarī*, written in a mixture of Sanskrit and Prakrit (and including a panegyric in the local language), about the amorous exploits of the infamous Jayacandra of Kannauj.[13] This king is also briefly (and subtly) mentioned at the end of HMK as the 'cripple Jaitra' (14.11), one of the many historical kings who ended up making a fool of himself – not unlike the Chauhan heroes of his Sanskrit epic.[14]

By paying attention to important literary issues – framing devices, ambiguous imagery, multiple layers, subversive edges, deep intertextual play, ironies, etc. – and the overall playfulness of *Hammīra-mahākāvya* this dissertation seeks to elucidate some of the interpretative problems encountered by historians, while also complicating some of the conclusions drawn from more superficial readings of Nayacandra's epic as a political eulogy, as I explain later in this introduction. In fact, this study partly answers to a call made by acclaimed historians like Cynthia Talbot and Romila Thapar themselves. They have both stressed the need for a more in-depth literary and comparative study of these historical poems to understand what they actually say (or do).[15] It is therefore hoped that a closer literary reading of HMK will further substantiate and possibly redirect ongoing historiographical research on what these texts reveal about socio-political realities external to the text.

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[13] See the PhD dissertation (in French) by Melinda Fodor (2017) for a recent discussion of Nayacandra's *Rambhāmañjarī* and the rare *saṭṭaka* genre of which Nayacandra's play is the first known follow-up of Rājaśekhara's tenth century *Karpūramañjarī*, the model of this subgenre of erotic drama.

[14] I discuss the significance of this verse as a meta-historic reflection in chapter five, in section "Playing with memories: Hammīra 'the good' becomes 'sleepy' Pṛthvīrāja/Jayacandra". It is worth noting here that there is not much history in this play. It is humorously framed as a reenactment of the story of Jayacandra, presented as the most powerful king of the time, with a plot revolving around his unsurpassed sex-appeal (and insatiable appetite for sexual pleasure). However, the play is infused with deep ironies, and full of oblique references to his not so ideal, tragic defeat at the hand of Shahabuddin Muhammad Ghori, which was precisely linked to his fatal infatuation with women. The play can be understood as a 'sequel' to his epic on Hammīra (and Pṛthvīrāja, the rival of Jayacandra). The prologue of his play even quotes how Nayacandra has described himself in his Sanskrit epic, referring to his fondness of two famous 'second-millennium' poets, Amaracandra and Śrīharṣa, in verses 1.16-19 (in the edition of Poddar (1976)). Both Nayacandra's works are infused with a deeply ambiguous play-spirit, which may even 'deceive' the clever reader, as the author puts it the prologue of his play, in the Prakrit verse 1.12 (in Poddar 1976: 16-17.)

[15] Thus in a forthcoming article by Cynthia Talbot, titled "Turks, warriors, and conquerors: Narratives of Hindu-Muslim encounters between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries", she concludes her discussion by saying that a "much more fine-grained analysis is required before we can gain a better understanding of heroic histories like *Pṛthvīrāj Rāso and Hammīra mahākāvya."* More than a decade ago Romila Thapar similarly acknowledged in her brief discussion of this understudied genre that "[a] more analytical and comparative study of these epic poems may reveal what they are actually saying" (Thapar 2005: 130).

This project originally started as an exploration of several other related historical texts about Hammīra and other Chauhan rulers, especially Pṛthvīrāja, written in various genres (*mahākāvya* "court epic"*, prabandha* "prose narrative"*, rāso* "martial ballad"). Both for practical and methodological reasons this study purposefully chooses to focus on one text. The added value of devoting a study to a single text, instead of presenting a study of many texts - which is clearly the more dominant scholarly trend - is that it allows to engage in a more profound way with the poem's multiple dimensions and literary complexity. In order to answer to the recurrent call for a more systematic understanding of historical poetry we need more close, in-depth readings of individual poems.[16] Typically, recent attempts to historicize or theorize the unprecedented profusion of historical literature, in various genres, are hindered by our poor understanding of the individual works themselves. This makes a more systematic, theoretical understanding of South Asian historical poetry rather difficult.

Generally speaking, in South Asia the composition and patronage of historical poetry takes an unprecedented 'popular' turn from the eleventh century onwards, in the courts of North and Western India, and according to Lawrence McCrea extended "at least into the thirteenth".[17] At this time patrons begin to increasingly appear as the heroic subjects of Sanskrit epic poems (*mahākāvya*) and plays. The sudden rise of this genre of 'patron-

[16] As in Bronner 2010 on the poetics of ambivalence in Bilhaṇa's historical poem, concluding that more research is needed to historicize the oft-noted attitude of political cynicism and more personal critical poetic voice in post-1000 AD Sanskrit literature, drawing attention to the work of Phyllis Granoff (1995) on similar attitudes in the *prabandha* literature (p. 481 in Bronner's article). Other interesting questions pertaining to the "outpouring of historiographic writing" (Talbot 2000: 293) after the establishment of Islamicate rule (ca. 1200 onwards) are addressed in an article by Talbot on an early sixteenth century historical *kāvya* in Telugu. Talbot suggests it may reflect a dialogue with the "flourishing Indo-Muslim historiographical tradition" (293). She argues that the confrontation with the 'other' may have provided a stimulus for a "contrasting self-identity" in a period of increased regionalization and dramatic political shifts. In support of this view, Talbot draws attention to an influential article by Sheldon Pollock on the political imagination of the great Indian epic Rāmāyaṇa. Pollock has famously argued that from the twelfth century onwards the Rāmāyaṇa template entered the political realm to "other" the Turkish rulers, as evidenced by historical epics like Jayānaka's Pṛthvīrājavijaya (ca. 1192-3). The text is key to Sheldon Pollock's argument. He labels this poem as the first text to imagine the career of a historical king *as the story of Rāma.* However, as Pollock notes himself, unfortunately "[s]erious analysis of this crucial text is nonexistent" (1993: 274, n. 12). Almost three decades later "the long-ignored *Pṛthvīrājavijaya*" (274) still awaits more careful literary analysis, as it remains the case with many other historical *kāvya*s.

[17] McCrea 2010: 506, who also makes note of the extant patron-centered works before the eleventh century. Most notably there is Bāṇa's seventh century *Harṣacarita* ("The life of Harṣa") about the emperor Harṣa, which clearly inspired later patron-centered epics, even though Bāṇa's work is not a *mahākāvya,* but an *ākhyāyikā*, an historical prose narrative. There is Vākpatirāja's eighth-century *Gauḍa-vaho* ("The killing of (the king of) Gauḍa"), composed in Prakrit, about the king of Kannauj Yaśovarman (early eighth century). The first known Sanskrit patron-centered *mahākāvya* is the tenth century *Navasāhasāṅkacarita*, by Padmagupta, in which his patron, the Paramara king Sindhurāja features as the hero of the epic.

centered' court poetry, and later related forms of historical literature like the *prabandha* literature, is intriguing and worthy of more careful scholarly consideration, especially since it becomes one of the most dominant forms for literary expression in the Mughal period.[18]

Despite the ostensible narrow focus of this study, my close reading of HMK intends to shed new light on several thematically related texts predating and postdating the composition of this text. This is because a work like HMK is deeply intertextual. An important challenge for the modern reader is to understand the *nature* of intertextual conversations. How do texts respond to each other, borrow from each other, or break away from earlier models? I will, for example, highlight that the composition of HMK and later 'Rajput' tales have clear roots in earlier traditions of historical poetry like the patron-centered epic and the *prabandha* literature (which itself critically reflects on the former genre), but they may have a somewhat parodic relation to these earlier trends. Yet, it remains difficult to speak about such issues - relations between genres, their literary models, the topic of literary innovation – because the histories we have are full of gaps, and supported by superficial readings of individual works. The important recent volume on *kāvya* titled *Innovations and Turning Points: Toward a History of Kāvya Literature* (2014, ed. by Bronner et al.) has addressed this problem in a powerful way.

In the final section of the introduction I will elaborate on the significance of this scholarly project, and how this dissertation aims to contribute to its goals. The point is that our understanding of the genre of historical *kāvya* is still very limited. How different are the aesthetic goals and poetic textures from earlier non-historical *kāvya* literature? Do they share similar literary models? Are works like HMK part of a wider *literary* movement of historical literature, composed in different genres and languages? How do innovations in writing about the past connect to the context in which this genre appears to flourish – like the dramatic socio-political shifts with the emergence of the Delhi Sultanate, increased political regionalization, the emergence of vernacular literary culture, the confrontation and dialogue with cultural and ethnic others, and so forth?

[18] I have adopted the term 'patron-centred epic' from McCrea's (2010) discussion of the seminal role of Bilhaṇa's Vikramāṅkadevacarita (c.1085-1089) in this new genre. Generally speaking, the rise of the genre of patron-centered epic seems closely linked to the aspirations of various clans in North and Western India who competed with each other to gain political supremacy and fill up the power-vacuum left by the fall of the Gurjara-Pratihāra empire after the turn to the eleventh century. Kings invited poets and bards to glorify their dynasties, and - not unimportantly - to keep silent about political problems, defeats and personal short-comings. For example, with the weakening of the Delhi Sultanate at the end of the fourteenth century and the (re-)emergence of independent kingdoms and sultanates, we see a clear resurgence of this type of patron-centered poetry, as evidenced by historical poems from the period that were now composed both in Sanskrit and in vernacular languages. In the Mughal period it appears to become even more dominant as a mode for literary expression, as evident from the work of Busch on vernacular historical poetry (2010).

1.2 Beyond power: how to read a Sanskrit historical poem from the 'vernacular millennium'?

What is the significance of the fact that the influential story of Hammīra – arguably the first true Rajput hero - finds its first fully-fledged epic rendering in the format of a Sanskrit *mahākāvya,* a 'great poem', written by a Jain monk in the early fifteenth century, more than hundred years after the historical events? Why are there no earlier versions extant, composed in a vernacular idiom, which was clearly becoming an accepted medium for literary expression? There is something significant about the fact that a 'popular' regional and tragic story finds its first epic expression in a prestigious Sanskrit *mahākāvya*, a genre known for its cosmopolitan character and perhaps also for its predominant preference for 'happy endings'.[19] For one thing, it says something about the extraordinary vitality and resilience of the tradition of Sanskrit poetry (*kāvya*), and the continued prestige of the 'epic' *mahākāvya* genre, whose origins go back 1500 years earlier. What does it mean to write a Sanskrit historical *mahākāvya* in the fifteenth century? And how does the entrance of the Hammīra legend into this great genre effects the treatment of his story? These questions may tell us something about how literary innovation in Sanskrit literature takes place in conversation with an emerging vernacular tradition, rather than that the latter replaces the vitality of literary expression in Sanskrit, as argued by Sheldon Pollock in a controversial article about the 'Death of Sanskrit' (2001).

In the case of North Indian literary culture, Pollock situates this dramatic cultural shift around the middle of the fifteenth century. He does this precisely by discussing the case of Tomar Gwalior, and the pioneering role of the vernacular poet Viṣṇudās, a generation after Nayacandra presented his Sanskrit epic at the Tomar court under Vīrama Tomar, a king who had also commissioned one of the first vernacular inscriptions, under the name of 'Bīraṃmadeva'.[20] Could we then see Nayacandra's Sanskrit court epic as the 'last' vain attempt to compose a Sanskrit court epic, signaling an endpoint of a slow and gradual process of literary decay? Does the poem fit into what Pollock classifies - in the context of Sanskrit literature in South India - as "imperial documents": state plays and epic poems about royal victories and successes (*carita, vijaya, abhyudaya*)?[21] Pollock's thesis on the

[19] See Pollock (2001: 222 ff.) for a discussion of this ideal in Sanskrit poetic theory.

[20] Thus Pollock's (2006: 394-5) discussion of the emergence of the vernacular in Gwalior. He discusses the vernacular inscription of Vīrama Tomar (Bīraṃmadeva) from 1405 as symptomatic of the vernacular transformation in Gwalior (292) as evidenced by the 'vernacularization' of the two Sanskrit epics by Viṣṇudās a generation later.

[21] Pollock 2001: 403.

waning vitality and creativity of Sanskrit applies more generally to what he famously labeled the 'vernacular millennium':

> For reasons that in each case demand careful historical analysis, it had everywhere become more important—aesthetically, socially, and even politically more urgent—to speak locally rather than globally. During the course of this vernacular millennium as I have called it, Sanskrit, the idiom of a cosmopolitan literature, gradually died, in part because cosmopolitan talk made less and less sense in an increasingly regionalized world.

In my earlier work – my MA thesis - on Nayacandra's HMK I have partly underwritten Pollock's thesis, and classified Nayacandra's work as a vain attempt to revitalize a dying Sanskrit literary tradition. Now I am inclined to disagree.

Let me start by making clear that my current understanding of Nayacandra's great poem is deeply inspired by two stimulating articles on Sanskrit *kāvya*. One is by David Shulman (2014) on Kālidāsa's influential masterpiece *Raghuvaṃśa* "The Dynasty of the Raghus", which provided a model for many later 'politically themed' historical *kāvya*s. The other article is by the same author, co-written with Yigal Bronner (2006), on literary innovation and creativity in post-1000 AD Sanskrit literature, which powerfully responds to and convincingly negates Pollock's thesis on the dying vitality of Sanskrit literature in the 'vernacular millennium.' Let me start with the latter article, titled "A Cloud Turned Goose: Sanskrit in the vernacular millennium."

Arguing against Pollock's thesis Shulman and Bronner postulate several theorems about the significance of post-1000 AD Sanskrit literature. One of them is as follows: "Sanskrit of the place' is almost by definition an essay in depth, and as geographical extent shrinks—sometimes to the space of a single, minute royal court—there is a corresponding deepening and complexity".[22] They demonstrate that many Sanskrit poems, which remain largely unread and undervalued, achieve an extraordinary temporal richness through their profound and playful engagement with earlier Sanskrit textual models and vernacular traditions. They demonstrate their point through a close reading of a fourteenth century Sanskrit poem from South India, the *Haṃsasandeśa,* "Goose-messenger" belonging to the highly meta-poetic and lyrical genre of 'messenger poems', of which Kālidāsa's fourth century *Meghasandeśa* "Cloud-messenger" was the seminal model. The depth in this poem, they show, is achieved by making "three

[22] Bronner and Shulman 2006: 9. It is worth noting in this regard that Nayacandra's choice to compose a Sanskrit epic about Hammīra, an historical king widely celebrated across North India and Western India, may have been conceived as a deliberate move to make a transregional appeal and ensure the spread of his poem outside its original context. And it clearly did. This may also explain, as I demonstrate at length in chapter five, why Nayacandra is purposefully ambiguous about the context of patronage.

intertextual canons" come together: the great Sanskrit epic Rāmāyaṇa, the Sanskrit classic of Kālidāsa, and a local tradition of vernacular poetry.[23] The essay highlights that the relation to such intertexts is not mere emulation. For example, through "acts of meaningful and purposeful inversion" the poet seeks to outdo earlier models, making "clouds become history", and achieve a literary complexity that goes beyond the possibilities of vernacular poetry.[24]

This dissertation underwrites several postulations in their article by demonstrating that Nayacandra's poetic project can similarly be understood as an essay, or competition in literary depth, which is also explicitly thematized in his work.[25] In Nayacandra's Sanskrit poem depth, literary complexity and innovation, is similarly achieved through an engagement with other texts. I will foreground how HMK achieves its complexity and dynamic movement through the intricate coming together of at least four dominant 'canonical' literary models: the great Sanskrit epics *Mahābhārata* and Rāmāyaṇa (especially the former), Kālidāsa's two major Sanskrit epics *Raghuvaṃśa* and *Kumārasambhava* (especially the former), the Jain *prabandha* literature (the thirteenth and fourteenth century collections of historical prose narratives), and an emerging vernacular tradition of martial literature about historical heroes, like Jayacandra, Pṛthvīrāja and of course Hammīra.

I will argue that the effect of this deep intertextual engagement generates a restless (*capala*) or playful back-and-forth movement between these different layers. This movement, and its somewhat 'confusing' (*vibhrama,* 14.46, the last word of the poem) effect on the reader, is ingeniously 'conceptualized' or articulated at the end of his poem, as *play*, a being "shaken by a play of restlessness" (*cāpala-keli-dolita,* 14.43), which is clearly meant as a nod to a famous verse from Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa*. As I explain in the first chapter, this important verse not only evokes the context of composition or alludes to Kālidāsa, but can be said to thematize the topic of intertextual play, innovation, and the

[23] ibid. p. 22.

[24] ibid. 12, and 21.

[25] In his play *Rambhāmañjarī* this happens in an episode involving a poetic contest between the jester and a 'servant maid' (*ceṭikā*) called Karpūrikā (a clear nod to his intertextual model, Rājaśekhara's *Karpūramañjarī*). It is the servant-poetess Karpūrikā who wins the contest with her verse on the moon rise, earning the approval of king Jayacandra who proclaims that her poem "has such a depth of poetic meaning that it makes even the heads of great poets 'shake' when they plunge deeply into it, because it pierces through the soft core". *...kavitvam īdṛg artha-gambhīraṃ yad avagāhyamāṇam marma-vedhitayā dhūnayati-tamāṃ mahākavīnām api kṣaṇam śirāṃsi* Sanskrit quoted from the edition of Poddar 1976, p.29. (The translation is my own). It is then that the king utters the verse quoted in the beginning of this introduction, saying that a poem, like an arrow, is only of use when it strikes the heart, and makes the head shake (*ghūrṇayati*) or nod (in approval).

restless 'shaking' and playful back-and-forth movement underlying the poet's vision on what poetry is and does.

Remarkably, this is almost exactly how Bronner and Shulman define the metaphor of 'depth' in their essay on Sanskrit poetry in the 'vernacular millennium.' They explain how

> Depth suggests movement—or a particular kind of restlessness—within a space open to experience, some of it probably unpredictable, waiting to be explored, perhaps including a strong personal element.[26]

and further:

> We experience depth in reading when we meet with certain types of complexities - for example, when the mind is thrown backwards and forwards simultaneously, or when it swerves, swivels, or loops as it follows the paradoxical directionalities of time and space. Depth results from the superimposition of the universal on the particular, of the macro on the micro, and from their strong interweaving. Depth is created by the concurrent existence of several literary canons, activated and brought into resonant relation with one another. Such activation anticipates an audience well-versed in and sensitive to the rich intertexts. It also reflects the organic fusion of scholar and poet - two roles that were occasionally, but not commonly, conflated in earlier periods. In the literature we are examining, such a merger is perhaps normative.[27]

Unmistakably, much of these observations apply to the aesthetic of Nayacandra's great poem of Hammīra, as I try to demonstrate throughout this dissertation. It is perhaps what makes the genre of *mahākāvya* literally great and prestigious, and much more than poetry of kings and their glorious or vainglorious deeds. For the modern reader, however, this complexity makes it extremely difficult to pin down what a great poem like HMK is about. I will show, for example, in the first chapter, that already in the prologue, or indeed in the very first verse, meta-poetic, thematic, religious-philosophical and intertextual levels become deeply intertwined. To fully understand and appreciate the extraordinary sense of (temporal) depth emerging from such verses, one needs to have a thorough understanding of all these levels. One needs to know how things are said or modelled in a great range of intertexts.[28] This is a major challenge for the modern reader, or the beginner student of Sanskrit *kāvya*, unfamiliar with the whole range of Sanskrit poetry

[26] Bronner and Shulman 2006: 28.

[27] ibid.

[28] In other words, the text constantly invited me to go back and forth between Nayacandra's verses and those of Kālidāsa, the *prabandha* literature, the story line of the *Mahābhārata* and the story of Hammīra in other sources. Obviously, for the trained fifteenth century reader or listener this confusing but delightful back and forth movement (*vibhrama*) must have happened spontaneously; it is *durvāraḥ* 'irresistible, without restraint' as we learn in the final verse (14.46).

that appears to constantly resonate in Nayacandra's verses. These insights were initially triggered during the highly stimulating reading sessions I enjoyed with Vidwan H.V. Nagaraja Rao in Mysore, who would often instantly point out that 'This is Kālidāsa, this is Bilhaṇa, this is a Vedic expression, etc.'[29]

In addition, my understanding of HMK is deeply influenced by a recent article of David Shulman, where he offers a close reading and revalidation of Kālidāsa's influential masterpiece *Raghuvaṃśa* "The Raghu Dynasty" (ca. fourth century). This poem appears to have had an important modelling function for later poems on kingship, like the many historical *kāvya*s, as also observed by others.[30] It is therefore instructive to elaborate on the significance of this text. Shulman starts by pointing out that "our understanding of the workings of *mahākāvya* in general is still very limited and conventional."[31] For example, complicating scholarly views about Sanskrit poetry's idealizing function, Shulman notes how, in his view, "Kālidāsa's kings are rather darker and unstable".[32] Generally speaking, the poem deals with the shifting fates and fortunes of the most famous lineage of kings, the 'mythological' Raghu dynasty. It is the dynasty which brought forth Rāma, the great epic hero and model of kingship. The story of Rāma is told in the middle of the poem, where his kingship, however, is far from idealized.[33]

Shulman's article offers many interesting insights about the aesthetic goals of Kālidāsa's epic poem. He argues that the poem is much less meant to reveal something 'about' its major themes – like time in relation to fortune, or the difficult pursuit of the aims of men (*puruṣārtha*) – than to *make audible* and thus actualize time's pulsation, expressed through the rhythm of Raghu kingship.[34] His article is called "Waking Aja", a reference to one of the Raghu heroes, who is urged to wake by the royal court poet or bard, after he has fallen asleep at a critical moment in the poem, namely right before the wedding ceremony of princess Indumatī. Shulman highlights, among other things, how meta-poetic and thematic levels intertwine. For example, important episodes like the 'good-morning' (*suprabhātam*) poems within the poem exert a powerful call to the reader's attention. The poet *intervenes* to wake up his characters – like Aja -, *and* the audience.

This dissertation similarly highlights the importance of being attentive to imagery of 'waking and sleeping' – and other temporal imagery, like remembering and forgetting -,

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[29] I'm extremely grateful to Vidwan H.V. Nagaraja Rao for these readings sessions on two different occasions, on December-February, 2017-2018; and February 2019.

[30] Satya Vrat, in his "Glimpses of Jaina Sanskrit Mahā*kāvya*s" (2006: 14), mentions *Raghuvaṃśa*'s influence to be the case for nearly all the Jain *mahākāvyas* discussed by him.

[31] Shulman 2014: 36.

[32] ibid. p. 37.

[33] See Gary Tubb (2014: 81) on this point.

[34] Shulman 2014: 67, speaking about the poem as an "actualization of the consistent pulsation of temporality as experienced in a culturally specific mode."

if we want to make sense of Nayacandra's poetic project on Hammīra, and its over-arching concern with expressing a certain vision of temporality (and history). It is beyond my intention – and far beyond my capacity – to approximate Shulman's analysis of how Kālidāsa's *models* reality, rather than 'describes' or just represents it. He thus demonstrates how Kālidāsa's verses achieve a remarkable level of isomorphism. Thematic, metrical, semantic, phono-aesthetic, and syntactic features are purposefully aligned to make audible and felt what Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa* is predominantly 'about' in Shulman's reading of the text, namely to express or activate the uneven flow and rhythmic pulsation of time. A reading more closely attuned to such isomorphic features of poetry may reveal whether Nayacandra's poetry shares a similar concern. I will occasionally highlight where I found cases of isomorphism to be striking, often at turning point moments in the narrative, when the Chauhan dynasty's fortune is at stake, at the verge of breaking. Through careful semantic and syntactic choices, we can often actually hear moments of rupture, or the tragic process of 'falling asleep'.

Despite HMK's purposeful modelling on Kālidāsa's work and its shared concern with making temporality audible and felt, this dissertation attempts to show how in Nayacandra's poem the rhythm of time and fortune is modelled in its own specific, arguably innovative tragic-historical (and intertextual) mode, with deep ironic undertones. I will propose that a story about the heroes of the present dark age, the *kaliyuga,* is indeed bound to sound more tragic, more real, 'historical' and less ideal. I will argue that Nayacandra's heroes are meant to be more unstable, more 'shaky and sleepy' than those in Kālidāsa's poetry. This is partly because other textual models – like the deeply tragic *Mahābhārata* template, or the critical *prabandha* template - also merge into Nayacandra's version of Chauhan history, and thus playfully confront the application of textual models like Kālidāsa's poetry.

Why are such features almost never considered in recent readings of HMK? Why do texts like HMK remain undervalued as works of poetry? Crucial structuring episodes like the meta-poetic interventions of 'good-morning' poetry have been literally left out in modern readings of HMK, even though they are inserted at critical moments in the poem. In fact, basic thematic analysis – identification of recurrent motifs and patterns - is virtually absent in recent discussions of Nayacandra's poem. This has something to do with the modern historiographical outlook on historical poems like HMK. Historiographical analysis of HMK and other related historical poetry is typically driven by questions pertaining to what Cynthia Talbot in her work on the Pṛthvīrāja tradition calls "the "social logic" of texts about the Indian past: who commissioned them and for what purpose".[35] Such questions are also central in recent readings of HMK by historians

[35] Talbot 2016: 7.

like Michael Bednar and Ramya Sreenivasan, which I will briefly review in the next section.

As an act of counterbalance, this dissertation stresses the importance of paying attention to the 'literary logic' of historical texts. Moreover, it is important to not over-emphasize the patron's role in shaping the narrative. Recent close readings of several biographical epics show that the poets' often critical or ambivalent voice tends to surface in these poems, as in the work of Yigal Bronner, Lawrence McCrea, Cynthia Talbot, Bihani Sarkar, Phyllis Granoff, Allison Busch, and Heidi Pauwels.[36] This is, of course, not unique to Indian literature, as it is also dominant, for example, in the chivalric and historic literature at medieval European courts.[37] The prevalence of such features in premodern historical or heroic narratives is intriguing and requires more scholarly attention. As the famous poet Bilhaṇa put it in the preface to his biography of the Western-Chaulukya king Vikramāditya VI (r.1076-1126), the fact that we praise Rāma and not Rāvaṇa rests on the efforts of the primordial poet Vālmīki alone: a king should better not anger his court poet.[38] Scholars like Yigal Bronner and Lawrence McCrea have drawn attention to such striking introductory verses, demonstrating that a poet like Bilhaṇa infuses his biographical epic with ambiguities and ambivalences to "unimagine the political" and implicitly question the heroic stature of his patron. Poets make use of poetic devices like 'ironic' trick praise (*vyāja-stuti*) – blame in the form of praise, and vice versa -, a figure of

[36] Thus for this attitude in Sanskrit *kāvya*, see Bronner (2010), McCrea (2010), Sarkar (2013) and Talbot (2012: 347) and the observations on the poetic attitude of cynicism in Jain *prabandha* literature by Granoff (1995: 354) and in vernacular historical poetry by Busch (2005: 41; 2012: 311-15) and Pauwels (2009: 199-200).

[37] For example, in his highly acclaimed *Herfstij der Middeleeuwen* ("Autumn of the Middle Ages") the famous Dutch historian and cultural critic Johan Huizinga observes something similar as one of the defining characteristics of the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century French chronicles composed by poet-historians in service of the French kings and the dukes of Burgundy. He notes (1975 [1919]: 60) how the authors of these texts start by proclaiming that they are about to praise the glorious deeds, bravery and martial feats of historical heroes. But no one seems to hold on to this intent. The texts tend to transform into tales of greed, cruelty and wickedness, critically exposing the human obsession with fame, glory and power. Huizinga observes how some authors as it were occasionally pick up the heroic tone of their narrative, as if they had briefly forgotten their self-proclaimed chivalric intent to praise the glorious deeds of the historical actors. In addition, Huizinga repeatedly describes how medieval cultures of hero-worship appears to be driven by self-deceptive dreams of heroism, in which harsh realities are transformed into a 'noble game'. Royal elites become obsessed with emulating the deeds of heroes like Alexander the Great, Hector or Caesar, or later heroes from the period of the crusades like Godfrey of Bouillon. In the tales themselves, however, we witness "an unstable equilibrium between sentimental earnestness and light ridicule", which in some works occasionally tilts over to parody (p. 72; I have translated the quote from the original Dutch).

[38] See the discussion of verse 1.27 in Bilhaṇa's *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* by Bronner (2010: 464) and McCrea (2010: 506-7).

style which is quite similar to the use of irony as a figure of style in pre-modern European literature.[39]

These features of historical and heroic poetry are clearly linked to what David Shulman has analyzed, in an article focusing on Tamil literature (1991), as the mutually interdependent, but often asymmetrical relationship between poet and patron.[40] Whereas great poets are dependent on great kings for financial support and acquire name and fame, kings in turn need poets as "brokers of fame" to secure a positive remembrance and to prevent their heroic deeds from going into oblivion. Yet, this relationship is uneven, as the poets themselves emphasize, like Bilhaṇa. Shulman highlights how the poet imagines himself to have the "monopoly" to determine whether a king achieves fame or blame.[41] A true poet cannot just unambiguously praise a king or patron, if he is not worthy of praise. He would risk the typical accusation of being a royal flatter and lose "his unique relation with the truth (*satya*), the ultimate source of his power and skill."[42]

This dissertation stresses the importance of not treating such aspects – patron-poet tensions, the poet's concern with truth, the unstable balance between praise and ridicule, etc. - as mere footnotes when discussing what premodern South Asian historical poetry is about, and what it does. Ambivalences, ironies, latent ridicule, ruptures in the heroic frame, may often pervade the poem as a whole. The poets who composed – or were paid to compose – historical narratives were very much aware of their potentially problematic role in shaping and reshaping the past. The poet has to play a kind of balance game when highlighting the darker aspects of kingship, and master poetic techniques that allow him to speak ambiguously. Overt critique may not only be dangerous for the poet, it may also be poetically distasteful. A poet like Nayacandra clearly masters this game of balance by not letting critical undertones or ironies completely overthrow the heroic frame.

The features outlined above make 'heroic poems' like HMK challenging to read. It requires close attention to tones, shifting perspectives, framing devices, silences, ambiguous imagery, word-play and syntax, intertexts, socio-historical context etc. But it is also rewarding to not take 'heroic poetry' at their face value, and to 'read ironically' for double (or more) layers as many premodern European texts have been read *and* valued in

[39] See Bronner (2009) on theoretical debates about *vyāja-stuti* "trick-praise" in Sanskrit poetic theory, discussing the confusion about its twofold application. It is worth comparing this with the discussion of irony as 'feigned praise' and 'false praise' in Simon Gaunt's *Troubadours and Irony* (2008 [1989]: 8-9), also noting that it may work the other way around, a statement of criticism may actually contain a message of praise (p. 9 and 10).

[40] Shulman 1992.

[41] Shulman 1992: 92.

[42] ibid. p. 91.

the past decades.[43] In a South Asian context this means taking seriously the poet's concern with guises (*vyāja*) and disguising meaning. The many striking ambivalences, ironies, tensions between format and content, etc. make a poem like HMK not only difficult, but also fascinating to read. Yet, although these aspects are clearly dominant, the poem is not only about matters of praise, fame, and latent royal criticism. One of the reasons why this dissertation foregrounds these aspects is because my research took shape as a conversation with recent readings of the text which tend to emphasize the socio-political dimensions of texts like HMK.

It is evident that the ground-breaking work of Sheldon Pollock on the strong connection between poetry (*kāvya*) and power (*rājya*) has something to do with this emphasis on the political dimension of Sanskrit literature, as well as the more general dominant trend in cultural studies to explore and expose mechanisms of power, and the assumption that this is more radical.[44] In his insightful introduction to literary theory, the literary critic Jonathan Culler has drawn attention to this latter trend, warning about the problem of what he calls "symptomatic readings".[45] A socio-political mode of analysis risks treating cultural products as "symptoms of something else, rather than of interest in themselves."[46] If this becomes the norm, "the specificity of cultural objects might be neglected, along with the reading practices which literature invites."[47] Related to this, we have the great paradox of literature, a practice that is associated both with the function of legitimizing and questioning the status quo. Both functions can be said to co-exist in premodern historical and heroic poetry, also in the Sanskrit historical poem. It is therefore not an either/or question, but a matter of choice on the part of the researcher. Which aspect do we want to highlight, at the risk of downplaying the other? This dissertation intends to highlight this paradoxical feature of literature itself – with a strong preference to do justice to the subversive side of a complex literary work like HMK, and its profound concern with paradoxical imagery itself.

All this brings me to the always looming tension between emic and etic approaches to the study of culture. I deliberately choose to use terms like tragedy and irony to speak about the poetic character of HMK, fully aware that to some cultural critics these terms may sound too Western, or shouldn't be uncritically applied to non-Western cultural practices. I will largely refrain from providing elaborate disclaimers about views on

[43] I have adopted this phrase from Catherine Colebrook's book *Irony* (*2004*), who states that "[r]eading ironically means, in complex ways, not taking things at their word; it means looking beyond standard use and exchange to what this or that might *really mean"* (p.4).

[44] Most importantly Pollock's influential book *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (2006).

[45] Culler 2011: 50-52

[46] ibid. 51

[47] ibid. 52

western and non-western uses of tragedy, irony, or history. These are complex notions (or multi-semantic English words, with Greek roots), with equally complex and far from uniform histories, which always fall short to adequately express their different usages outside the theoretical field. I hope my use of these terms will become clear from my engagement with the text itself, while occasionally pointing out cultural resemblances and differences which I find striking or appealing. Moreover, choosing for this or that concept, or theory, often doesn't solve the problem of literary interpretation. Complex cultural objects like literary works tend to escape the categories, classifications and theories we impose on them.

On this point, I would like to quote the apt methodological observations of Lawrence McCrea, in the conclusion to his reappraisal of one of the great poems of Sanskrit literature, Māgha's seventh century *Śiśupālavadha* ("The Slaying of Śiśupāla"). He highlights that the indigenous framework of *rasa* theory, which tries to define a poem's dominant aesthetic 'flavor' (*rasa*) doesn't always help to understand what a particular poem is really about. He first notes how a fourteenth century commentator understood the dominant mood to be the 'heroic' (*vīra*). However,

> By casually assigning the poem to the broad and generic category of "heroic" poetry, it avoids, and may even serve to suppress, the crucial question of just what is special and unique about the heroism of Māgha's Kṛṣṇa, and about the emotional mood that is generated through the portrayal of a hero most notably characterized by a near total lack of detectable affect. If we are to work toward a responsible and adequately nuanced treatment of the great works of Sanskrit poetry, and a fortiori, of the Sanskrit literary tradition more broadly, it is essential that we attempt to make sense of each poem as unique object in its own right, which, while it may in some cases be usefully elucidated through terms and categories drawn from either western or indigenous critical traditions, can never simply be uncritically reduced to them.[48]

This dissertation underwrites this position, by making a similar case for moving beyond the label of 'heroic poetry' and 'praise poetry'. The framework of *rasa* theory proves highly inadequate to evaluate the tragic heroism of a king like Hammīra. Reading HMK as a 'heroic poem' may distract us from what really happens throughout the poem. To a modern audience, such labels might lead one to think that these poems are rather one-dimensional eulogies, celebrating the chivalric or Rajput machismo that comes with heroic (*vīra*) masculinity. I will emphasize the importance of understanding HMK as deeply tragic and playful in spirit, rather than triumphalist like the patron-centered historical epic. Because Nayacandra's poem adopts their format – at least nominally – scholars have often too easily looked at it through the lens of its supposedly 'eulogistic'

[48] McCrea 2014: 140.

heroic poetics and political goals. But Nayacandra's poem is not about his patron, nor does it follow a triumphalist narrative logic.[49]

I choose to label HMK as a 'tragic-historical' epic to stress the marked difference with the tradition of patron-centered court epic, a genre which is obviously more overtly eulogistic in tone and intent.[50] By emphasizing the tragic dimension of a text like HMK I am not denying that tragic story lines do not fall into the category of praise poems. Tragedy, of course, doesn't preclude praise, just like foolishness doesn't necessarily undermine the quality of heroic courageousness. Tragic stories indeed typically revolve around heroes who are exceptionally brave, courageous or noble. But not always. They may be more about the *possibility* of nobility when facing the forces of fate. I will show that Nayacandra clearly questions the brave and noble nature of his main hero, and I will propose that a concern with questioning is a dominant mode throughout HMK.

I will emphasize that tragic plots – in which the story line revolves around the shift from fortune to misfortune – come along with a set of themes, poetic strategies, effects, emotional responses and tensions that are different from or at least less pronounced in stories with an overtly triumphant plotline. I contend that tragic story lines work badly as legitimizing or 'othering' narratives. This is in part because they tend to radically complicate the world of ideals and normative behavior, including the aesthetic ideal of poetic justice: the pleasure we derive from stories in which virtuous conduct is rewarded with fortune, and vice versa. Nominally speaking, the tradition of Sanskrit poetry (*kāvya*) underwrites this ideal, dictating that a poem should invite the reader to act like virtuous

[49] Again, it is worth noting that thanks to recent efforts of scholars like Yigal Bronner and Lawrence McCrea we know that a seminal work of the genre of patron-centered epic, Bilhaṇa's *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*, itself purposefully confronts the triumphalist logic of a 'good guy vs. bad guy' narrative. I will demonstrate that in HMK this aspect goes way beyond what these scholars have identified as Bilhaṇa's poetics of ambivalence. I will argue that an overtly tragic poem like HMK purposefully stretches the incongruity between heroic format and the often anti-heroic content to much more extreme levels, while proposing that Nayacandra's poem has a somewhat parodic relationship to this genre.

[50] One of the problems I'm hinting at involves the difficulty of classifying texts like HMK and thematically or stylistically similar texts, which are variously referred to as heroic histories, literary-historical epics, tragic-heroic poems, Rajput epics, historical eulogies or biographies, tragic romances, imperial documents etc. More than just a problem of translation or categorization, we may be dealing with a problem of interpretation, and the complex web of relations between seemingly similar texts. How do we make sense of seemingly opposing narrative registers and functions of such texts? Some, like the patron-centred epics, are clearly motivated by political agendas and needs to legitimate claims to power. Other texts, however, may not fall in this category. For example, as Romila Thapar (2005: 119) remarks about the negative portrayal of Pṛthvīrāja in *Pṛthvīrājarāso*, this cycle of poems reads more like "an explanation of defeat in the guise of a eulogy and often expressed with sensitivity". She makes the important distinction (p.133) that poems can be "forms of legitimizing power and status or attempts at explaining why these were lost." See Talbot (2016) for a book length study on the *Pṛthvīrājarāso* tradition and Pritchett (1980) for an analysis of its core narrative elements.

Rāma-like protagonist, and not like villainous Rāvaṇa-like antagonist.[51] By contrast, in a tragic story like that narrated in HMK, the reader is much less invited to emulate the heroic protagonist whose acts, after all, lead to misfortune. Rather, they seem to revolve around troubling questions about why the Chauhan heroes were defeated, and why the 'other' Sultanate side won.

1.3 The many sides of Hammīra 'the good', 'the bold' - and the enemy 'other'?

Let me repeat that HMK offers us the earliest extant epic rendering of the heroic deeds of the famous Rajput king Hammīra Chauhan of Ranthambhor and his tragic struggle against the Delhi Sultan Alauddin Khalji, who defeated the Chauhan king in 1301. The cultural significance of this event, or at least of the stories and historical memories arising from it, can hardly be underestimated. I will propose that Hammīra is the first historical ruler to embody the ideal of Rajput warrior-hood and resistance, as opposed to the more pragmatic concern of making alliances with a cultural and ethnic other. Hammīra became a profoundly ambiguous hero, a tragic-historical 'model', whose story offered a literary template to explore multiple perspectives and tensions revolving a core socio-political and cultural problem: alliance-making with an ethnic, cultural and more powerful 'other'. Despite the great literary and historical relevance of the Hammīra tradition, its key texts, and the story itself, remains understudied and poorly understood.

Instead of paraphrasing the story of Hammīra as it is told in HMK, I want to make some more general observations about the significance of his famous legend. The reason for this is because Nayacandra appears to play an intriguing game with what we could call the 'traditional story line', infusing most – if not all – the key elements with inversive twists, as I try to demonstrate in chapter five. Moreover, it takes eleven cantos (out of fourteen) before we reach the 'core' of the Hammīra legend. Before saying more about how these earlier cantos connect to Nayacandra's version of the Hammīra story, it is useful to further explain what the story of Hammīra signified.

Among many other things, Hammīra came to embody the (ambiguous) ideal of heroic, but unsuccessful resistance to Sultanate rule, or to a superior might in general. However,

[51] As for example discussed in McCrea 2010: 507, and 2013: 185-9, and Pollock 2001: 217-19.

as always with great stories that take on epic proportions, there are many sides to the story, generating many conflicting versions, all of which may claim to tell the 'true' story. Of crucial importance for the birth of the Hammīra legend, I believe, is that the fall of Ranthambhor is connected to the first recorded instance of *jauhar,* the 'heroic' practice where the women and children collectively immolate themselves before the warriors rush into battle to face certain defeat. Hammīra was believed to have faced his fate with an extraordinary courageousness, unlike other rulers at the time who surrendered to the superior might of Alauddin or fled the battlefield.[52] Hammīra, the last ruler of the famous Śākambharī branch of Chauhans, like no historical king before him, came to embody the ideal of the selfless warrior-king, always true to his word, unafraid to sacrifice everything – his kingdom and his life – for the sake of the true hero's vow (*vīra-vrata*). Moreover, so the legend goes, he did all this for the sake of protecting another, not just another, but literally an 'other', a 'foreigner', a Mongol and Muslim warrior who had fled from the service of Alauddin and was given shelter at the Chauhan kingdom of Hammīra. Tradition links Hammīra's defeat – and thus the *jauhar* in the fort - to his unwavering adherence to his vow to protect several Mongol refugees. The result was that Hammīra became one of the most famous and legendary historical heroes of the time. His story was told and sung at many courts across Northern and Western India.

In the fifth (and last) chapter I will draw attention to a striking difference regarding the significance of the Hammīra story, and that of his predecessor Pṛthvīrāja. Unlike the early literary trajectory of 'sleepy' Pṛthvīrāja – discussed in Cynthia Talbot's recent study on the Pṛthvīrāja tradition (2016)[53] - the Chauhan king Hammīra initially enjoyed a much more positive status. Soon after his death he was awarded – at least initially – with the celebratory status of being Hammīra the 'good' or courageous (*sattva*). In one fifteenth-century tale, by the famous author of Maithilī (in Northern Bihar) Vidyāpati, he even emerges as the epitome of compassion (*dayā, karuṇā*). In the preface of the famous mid-fourteenth century anthology of Sanskrit poetry, the *Śārṅgadhara-paddhati* "The anthology (compiled by the poet) Śārṅgadhara" the compiler proudly links his ancestry to the Chauhan court of the brave Hammīra. Later, however, Hammīra would acquire the more ambiguous heroic status of being Hammīra the 'bold' or 'obstinate' (*haṭha*), as in the title given to an early nineteenth century classical Hindi epic and a beautiful series of paintings illustrating his story made at the court of Mandi in the far north of the Punjab hills. Regardless of the ambiguity surrounding Hammīra's tragic heroism, for many centuries this Chauhan king was remembered across North India as one of the most famous historical heroes of the present age.

[52] I will support this point by referring to several early sources, discussed at length in chapter five in section 5.3 "Hammīra the good (*sattva*) becomes Hammīra 'the bold' (*haṭha*)").

[53] Talbot 2016: 29-68.

The prevalent misunderstanding of HMK as a straightforward eulogy may come from the way Nayacandra somewhat deceitfully introduces his poem as a praise poem (*stavanaṃ*, 1.12), deliberately imitating the style and tone of the genre of eulogistic biography (*carita,* 1.10). He thus introduces the subject of his poem, Hammīra Chauhan, as the one and only praiseworthy king of the present age, the *kali-yuga* ("the age of conflict"), because he excelled in the quality of selfless goodness or courage (*sattva-guṇena,* 1.8). But there is something unsettling about this framing. The expectations are not met. When reading the actualized narrative, the main protagonist often appears far from being a luminous example of goodness, a model of kingship or altruistic warrior-hood supposed to inspire admiration, emulation and a 'purification' (1.10), at least not in the expected sense. I will show how Nayacandra presents Hammīra as the last 'sleepy' ruler, whose story is modelled as a somewhat tragi-comic reenactment of the story of his infamous predecessor Pṛthvīrāja, *the* epitome of sleepy kingship at Nayacandra's time.

Nayacandra's self-styled heroic biography (*caritaṃ,* 1.10) and praise poem (*stavanaṃ,* 1.12) is clearly not just about Hammīra's legendary story alone. Quite curiously indeed, it is only after eight (out of fourteen) cantos that the story of his kingship takes off. In fact, even though his auspicious birth is announced at the end of the fourth canto, we have to wait until the eleventh canto before we encounter the traditional core element of Hammīra's tragic story: his heroic promise or vow to protect the Mongol Mahimāsāhi, and his unwavering adherence to it– the typical *casus belli* and start of other Hammīra poems at Nayacandra's time – but not in HMK.[54] Why is the largest part of Nayacandra's epic of Hammīra seemingly not concerned with Hammīra's traditional story and the heroic quality that made him famous or infamous, his *sattva,* deriving from his legendary unwillingness to give up his vows and bend his head before the enemy?

This study not only emphasizes the importance of looking beyond the surface framing and intent of HMK and 'read ironically', but also to take seriously the poem's large, zoomed-out scope. It is important to not only focus on the story of Hammīra itself, in our evaluation of what the poem is about, or what it does.

It is instructive, in this regard, to briefly mention the most basic structure of the poem (which tells us almost nothing about what actually happens in these cantos). The first two cantos describe Hammīra's predecessors from the illustrious Chauhan dynasty, from its mythological origins up to the kingship of Pṛthvīrāja. The third canto describes the downfall of Pṛthvīrāja. The fourth canto describes the tragic kingship of his descendants, up to the birth of Hammīra at the end of this canto. The fifth canto describes the change to the spring season, and the concomitant erotic mood. The sixth canto describes erotic

[54] I elaborate on the 'core elements' of the Hammīra legend in chapter three where I discuss Nayacandra's epic as a playful engagement with more overtly heroic accounts of the 'traditional 'Hammīra legend.

water games (*jala-krīḍā*) in the lake, the seventh canto describes the fore play and love making in the fort's inner chambers. The eighth canto describes how Hammīra receives Royal Fortune from his father. The ninth canto describes Hammīra's 'world conquest' (*digvijaya*) and the ensuing court intrigues involving Hammīra's fatal decisions to blind and castrate his minister Dharmasiṃha "Lion Dharma", and replace his wise 'half-brother' Bhojadeva by a 'hero' called Ratipāla "Protector of Sexual Pleasure". The tenth canto describes how Bhojadeva goes over to the side of Alauddin, who vows to completely destroy the Chauhan dynasty. The eleventh canto describes how Hammīra rejects an offer for truce, leading to a battle in which Nusrat Khan, an important Sultanate general, is killed. The twelfth canto describes two days of fighting, something the valiant Hammīra requested. In the thirteenth canto all sorts of court intrigues unfold, culminating in Hammīra's decision to order his queens and daughter to enter the flames, before rushing himself into the battlefield to die at the side of his most loyal warriors, including the Mongols who had taken shelter with him. The last canto offers a reflection on what happened after Hammīra's death, in the form of a series of lamentations about the death of the Chauhan king, who is hyperbolically presented as the only praiseworthy hero of the present age.

Very often 'the surface story' in each canto is radically undermined by all sorts of subversive poetic strategies: the lamentations are put in the mouth of 'others', heroic utterings are framed as delusional statements, deafening silences, symbolic names and imagery, inversions of traditional story lines, etc. More generally, I will suggest that Nayacandra purposefully subsumes Hammīra's personal history into a much grander, tragic narrative about the complete destruction of the Chauhan dynasty, in which Hammīra emerges as the new epitome of 'sleepy kingship'. Through a contextualization of the Hammīra story itself, I seek to demonstrate that Nayacandra's great Sanskrit poem almost literally intends to 'shake' the heroic foundations of the Hammīra legend.

Finally, regarding the topic of the 'other', it is worth making two notes. The name Hammīra is the Sanskritization of the Perso-Arabic Amir, a word that came to denote a strong, worthy commander – often the Turkish enemy other (*para*) in inscriptions and literary works before the fourteenth century. I will highlight that Nayacandra was aware of the 'irony of history' that the last Chauhan king, a famous Rajput king, died because he refused to make an alliance with the enemy 'other'.[55]

[55] See the section called 'The fate of Hammīra' in Finbarr Flood (2009: 255-259, a) for an elaborate discussion of the use of the title "Hammīra", pointing out this irony of history from the perspective of the present.

Secondly, the Sultanate enemy in Nayacandra's poem is mostly referred to as *śaka*, a king of a non-indigenous clan, and curiously, never by his dynastic name, Khalji.[56] Originally it is the Sanskrit for 'Scythian', someone from Central Asia, and it is used interchangeably with *yavana,* "Ionian/Greek", and *mleccha*, "barbarian" and *turuṣka* or "Turk", used less frequently in HMK. Romila Thapar has made the important observation that pre-modern texts, when for example referring to Turks of Afghans as *śaka* or *yavana,* reveal "an attempt to associate new entrants with existing categories which are therefore expressive of more subtle relationships than we have assumed".[57] She notes how especially the term *śaka* might have a "complimentary" association, given their connection to the *śaka* rulers of the beginning of the common era who founded the important *śaka* calendar of 78 CE which is still in use today.[58] This connotation might be present in HMK too, partly explaining why the Khalji dynastic name is never mentioned. I have therefore chosen to not translate the original words, like *śaka, yavana* or *mleccha,* which in much early studies have been translated as Muslims or Muhammadans, even in the relatively recent work of scholars like Phyllis Granoff. For example, she included a brief discussion of HMK in an article on the colossal images of Jinas adorning the hill-fort rocks of the Gwalior fort, and states that:

> Extant literature of the period indicates that the Jains regarded the Muslim victories as a tragic moment in history. (...) This is a poem, then, that describes in poignant terms the death of a Hindu king at the hands of invading Muslims and was written by a Jain monk who was present in the Gwalior court close to the time of the large sculptural project there. Nayacandrasūri also tells us that hearing about the death of the heroic Hammīra, there were many poets who composed poems to sing his glory (14.1). It seems reasonable to conclude that such poems about the invasions of the Muslims and the death of Hammīra formed a part of the literary and probably political culture of Gwalior at the time we are investigating. In addition, Nayacandrasūri makes frequent reference to the Kali yuga in his poem. His saga of the death of Hammīra seems inseparable from his firm conviction that both poet and king lived in a terrible time.[59]

Much of Granoff's work on Jain narrative literature and poetry is inspiring, and I often draw on her close readings in this dissertation. In the same article she also makes perceptive notes about how Nayacandra's with a "wry sense of irony" writes about his extraordinary skill in writing erotic poetry, a task that is far better suited to monks who

[56] See Thapar "The Tyranny of Labels" (1996) for further discussions of these terms, critiquing the way these have often been translated as "Muslims", noting that the religious connotation is mostly absent in the texts.

[57] Thapar 1995: 9.

[58] ibid. p. 12.

[59] Granoff 2006: 41.

have never made love.[60] But such conclusions as the one above, need nuancing. I will stress that in HMK we are dealing mostly with a conflict between the Chauhans and the Śakas (and not the Muslims or Khaljis), or between *hammīras* and *śakas.* Those on Hammīra's side are typically presented as thriving on 'heroism' (*vīra*) and valor (*vikrama*), whereas the Śakas thrive on 'playful deceit' (*lasat-chalena*).[61] We will see that this distinction has very little to do with a struggle of good vs. bad (or Hindu vs. Muslim). The Śakas are presented as almost divine tricksters (*māyāvin*), incarnations of Viṣṇu or Śiva, who manage to control their fates (and time), whereas many Chauhan kings are presented as 'unstable' (*capala, tarala*) warriors, who get deluded (*moha*) and therefore get tricked into defeat.

1.4 Recovering the 'poetical chaff'

The current scholarly and popular understanding of HMK has been much informed by the useful but highly outdated English preface and detailed paraphrase of HMK from the first edition by Nilkanth Kirtane (1879). Although written more than a century ago, it remains the starting point to get acquainted with the poem's content. It has been reprinted in Jinavijaya Muni's later edition (1968; reprint 1993) and in a Hindi translation of HMK by Nathulal Trivedi (1997). It is worth highlighting how the paraphrase from Kirtane's edition has cast a long shadow over the interpretation of Nayacandra's great poem. This is mostly because this 39-page long paraphrase is highly selective, filtered through a historiographical outlook on the text. "The present attempt to place the English reader in possession of the historical information contained in the *Hammīra Kāvya",* Kirtane writes in 1879, "will, I presume, be acceptable to those who are interested in the

[60] ibid. 37. Her translation of verse 14.33 grasps this irony well:

> Those who speak eloquently of sexual passion, in phrases deeply moving, have never made love. And those who have made love, know not how to describe it. The elephant tusks that poets glorify, white as jasmine, are not what the elephant uses for chewing. No one can even see the teeth that the elephant uses to chew.

[61] It is possible that battle between the Chauhans and Śakas is meant to resonate with the influential cycle of stories surrounding the war between the legendary king Vikrama and the Śaka king Śālivāhana, who gave their names to the 'rivaling' calendars, respectively the Vikrama era (starting in 57 CE) and Śaka era (starting in 78 BC.)

advancement of our knowledge of Indian history".[62] In addition, his historiographical paraphrase is highly coloured through his heartfelt admiration for Hammīra. This is how Kirtane introduces the subject of Nayacandra's epic:

> The hero of the poem is Hammīra Chohān of Raṇasthaṃbhapura (Raṇathaṃbhor), a name celebrated in Hindi song. Hammīra is one of those later heroes of India who measured their swords with the Muhammadan conquerors and fell in the defence of their independence. Even the history of the conquered is not without interest. The man who fights against hope, - fights because he thinks it [is] his duty to do so, - who scorns to bow his neck before the oppressor, because he thinks such a course opposed to the ways of his ancient house, *deserves our sympathy and our admiration*. Hammīra is such a character.[63]

For Kirtane, Hammīra signifies a hero from the Hindu religion, whose story is of national significance. He deserves to be admired because of his extraordinary resistance against a loathsome 'oppressor' from the Muslim or Muhammadan faith.[64] Kirtane's view of Rajasthan's heroic past is partly indebted to the orientalist, romanticist and colonial vision of the British administrator 'colonel' James Tod. Kirtane cites him sympathetically as the "sentimental and enthusiastic annalist of Rājasthan" in whose work the Chauhans are called the noblest of Rajputs. Kirtane explicitly states that he wants to carry Tod's research further, by supplying new "historical information", from a text he believes was not available to Tod. He does this, as he explains himself, by sifting this valuable historical information from the tedious ahistorical "bushels of poetical chaff", "poetical nonsense" and "fanciful conceptions."[65] As noted above, this sort of evaluation or devaluation would become a cliché in the evaluations of historical poetry in later histories of Sanskrit literature.[66]

Kirtane's historiographical outlook on the text is one of the reasons why he characterizes the main narrative as "all through, very uneven"[67] and why he left out five cantos from his paraphrase of the text, maintaining that these "as not possessing any

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[62] Kirtane 1879: ii. Emphasis added.

[63] ibid. iv.

[64] Kirtane does also write sympathetically about Nayacandra's work, which as poetry, "has considerable merits" (ii). But he also uses this point to reinforce his religious standpoint. Thus, while mentioning the way Nayacandra opens his poem by simultaneously addressing the Hindu gods and the Jain 'ford-makers' (*tīrthaṅkaras*) we learn that this possibly reflects "the freedom of thought so characteristic of the age in which the author lived, when the narrow and bigoted intolerance even of the Muslīm had begun to appreciate the beauties of the allegorical language of the Hindu popular religion"(v).

[65]Kirtane 1879: v and xi.

[66] Kirtane 1879: iv.

[67] Kirtane 1879: v.

historical value, may be ignored in this precis of the poem."[68] Kirtane also stresses that even in the more historic chapters Nayacandra "relapses into rhapsody which amounts to a confession of his ignorance of the historical facts."[69]

Let me make clear that I do not mean to criticize Kirtane himself and blame him for his time-bound vision and approach to the text. The reason why I am unsympathetically quoting Kirtane's words, is to explain how his criteria for paraphrasing HMK continue to influence our understanding of this poem, and of the significance of the Hammīra's story more generally. The point is that his 39-page long paraphrase of HMK constitutes a somewhat deceptive, unreliable guide for historians to make sense of what 'really' happens in the poem. By leaving out crucial poetic aspects – complex imagery, silences, ambiguous passages, play on names, recurring motifs etc. – Kirtane's paraphrase falls short, like any paraphrase of course, to explain *how* Nayacandra tells or poetically models the history of the Chauhans.

Later studies and the new Hindi prefaces in the edition of the HMK by Muni Jinavijaya in 1968 have not only continued the modern historiographical practice of sifting the important historical matter from the non-historical chaff, but have also reinforced the idea of Hammīra as a national hero of the Hindu religion, whom HMK is said to celebrate, despite the many unheroic episodes.[70]

In the past three decades scholars have been responding to such earlier scholarly tendencies to evaluate such poems in religious or nationalistic terms, which cast heroes like Hammīra and Pṛthvīrāja as Hindu heroes fighting for independence from loathsome Muslim oppressors. It is worth mentioning in this regard that Nayacandra's Sanskrit epic and several other Sultanate-period works, including the cycle of poems about Pṛthvīrāja, have thus earlier been classified as "Hindu epics of resistance" as opposed to "Muslim

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[68] Kirtane 1879: vi.

[69] Kirtane: vi; It is worth noting how Satya Vrat, a scholar of Jain historical *kāvya,* seems to have disagreed with Kirtane, and calls him "the only poet who may be called the nearest approach to a modern historian" (Vrat 2003: 163). Even though Vrat's vision fits in the trend to judge Indian historical poetry against the model of the "trustworthy" modern historian, he does have a point that HMK is probably more driven by 'historiographical concerns' than the tradition of patron-centered historical poetry.

[70] The HMK is thus accredited the status of a "national poem" (*rāṣṭriya mahākāvya*) about one of the nation's most famous historical heroes Singh (1968: 28) "Hammīr Mahā*kāvya* – ek paryālocan", in Jinavijaya 1993 (1968). Both introductions are also reproduced in the Hindi translation of the *HM* by Nathulal Trivedi (1997). Candra Prabha's discussion of HMK in his *Historical Mahākāvyas in Sanskrit, Eleventh to Fifteenth Century A.D* (1976: 291-319) is largely based on Kirtane's paraphrase. Dasharatha Sharma, the historian of the Chauhans, also expresses his sympathy for Hammīra's admirable efforts to fight the Muslim conqueror. He explicitly states that Hammīra should be forgiven for his faults – described in the HMK -, unlike his notorious predecessor Pṛthvīrāja whose flawed, indolent character he holds responsible for the advent of Muslim rule, see Sharma 1975: 132-3. Similar evaluations of Nayacandra's work are found in Satya Vrat's chapters on HMK in his work on Jain Sanskrit *mahākāvyas* (Vrat 1994: 136-152 and 2003: 163-180).

epics of conquest" following an influential article by Aziz Ahmad (1963). This problematic communal reading, imposing modern religious dichotomies on a pre-modern past, has led scholars to put effort into re-interpreting many of these texts. Much of the recent discussions of the HMK and other thematically related texts are explicitly framed as a response to this article.[71] In nuancing the idea of HMK as a "Hindu epics" these studies tend to supplant earlier 'religious readings' by a socio-political mode of analysis. Typically, these new readings interpret HMK as a political eulogy about a Rajput or *kṣatriya* warrior-king, composed to glorify the ideals of an emerging warrior elite, reinforcing its claims to power and social status.[72]

Accordingly, current scholarly historical analysis of HMK hinges on the assumption that the composition of HMK is linked to and shaped by the political agenda of its patron. The early Tomar kings were probably in need of a legitimizing narrative after they had – according to contemporary Persian chronicles and the later Mughal-period classical Hindi *Gopācālākhyāna* "Chronicle of Gwalior" - treacherously captured the Gwalior fort.[73] In societies where claims to power were closely linked with social status and lineal descent, those who aspire to rule need stories that establish their status as legitimate rulers. This function is of course prominent in the tradition of patron-centered historical literature – in both Sanskrit and vernacular languages - commissioned by royal patrons from rivaling dynastic clans who wanted to see their life story and/or that of their predecessors glorified and refashioned into epic poetry.

It is tempting to fit HMK in this tradition of patron-centered court epic, especially since it is clearly modelled on this genre and to a great extent adopts its formal, stylistic and thematic characteristics.[74] Moreover, it seems not to have been uncommon at the time for Chauhan poems to be commissioned by Chauhan elites for purposes of legitimation (with important exceptions).[75] However, it has often been overlooked that Nayacandra Sūri's

[71] See, for example, the studies in Richard Eaton's edited volume *India's Islamic traditions* (2003) where Ahmad's article is reprinted as the first essay of the book. Similarly, Michael Bednar's doctoral dissertation (2007) is explicitly framed as a reaction against Ahmad's article. It also forms an important point of contrast in the discussion of HMK and other Sultanate period epics in Thapar (2005: 116-131) and Sreenivasan (2002).

[72] As in Bednar (2007 and 2017), Sreenivasan (2002) and Talbot (2016: 65-66).

[73] See Pauwels 2020 for a discussion of these texts.

[74] As done in Talbot (2016: 56) and Sreenivasan (2002: 287-8.)

[75] The mid-fifteenth-century vernacular *Kānhaḍade-prabandha* (on the Chauhans of Jalor) and the Sanskrit play *Gaṅgadāsa-pratāpa-vilāsa-nāṭakam* (on the Chauhan king of Champaner, discussed in Kapadia (2014)) are thus clearly composed to praise a Chauhan patron, both linking the heroes of their poem to the Śākambhari Chauhans Hammīra and Pṛthvīrāja. By contrast, the popular old-Rajasthani *Vīsaladevarāsa* (c. 1450, edition and translation by Smith 1976), on the Chauhan ruler Vighraharāja (Vīsala), clearly pokes fun at this Chauhan king who is repeatedly accused of being foolish (*mūḍha*), similar to the portrayal of Chauhans in HMK. Both texts don't really fit into the tradition of patron-centered eulogies.

poem on the Chauhans may not have been commissioned by a Chauhan patron.[76] It doesn't contain the typical, and perhaps expected, praise of a patron. All we learn is that it was composed within the context of a literary challenge held at the court of the Tomar king Vīrama. How to explain this somewhat atypical context – a Chauhan poem in a Tomar court? Ramya Sreenivasan, even though aware of this context, doesn't really address the problem. Adopting the framework in which the sponsorship of Sanskrit poetry serves a political goal, she writes how

> Nayacandra legitimizes his king's authority to rule by his very choice of language and genre. In a period when local narratives, both courtly and popular, were gradually emerging in a regional linguistic and literary tradition, Nayacandra chose to compose in a classical language and canonical genre. Through such choices, the poet tacitly exalts his patron by locating him on the same plane as the great kings of the past, in whose courts such poems were composed. *It is this concern with legitimizing his patron (the present king) that shapes Nayacandra's treatment of his protagonist.* It is Hammīra's kingship that is celebrated, as he launches a series of expeditions to conquer Sarasapura, Dhara, Ujjaina, Citrakuta (Chitor), Abu, Varddhanapura, and several other kingdoms and towns.[77]

But how does Nayacandra's poem about the kingship of the Chauhan Hammīra work as a legitimizing story for his patron 'the present king', who is a Tomar ruler? Curiously, the Tomars are strikingly absent from Nayacandra's version of Chauhan history. Sreenivasan's emphasis on the legitimizing function of courtly poetry is more or less representative of historical analysis of 'Rajput epics', as in the work of Cynthia Talbot, Michael Bednar, and Aparna Kapadia's recent book *In Praise of Kings*.[78] One major problem with foregrounding the poet's concern to 'idealize' kingship - in case of HMK (and probably related Rajput poems) - is that idealizing episodes are typically followed or preceded by episodes that undermine the ideal. Thus, the episode used by Sreenivasan to illustrate her point, namely about Hammīra's successful "world-conquest" *digvijaya* in the beginning of the ninth canto, only forms the idealistic prelude to a story line *in the very same canto*, that radically inverts Hammīra's celebratory status as an exemplar of kingship. I will show that such discrepancies between idealizing and criticizing registers may betray much more than just the poet's ambivalence to his heroic subject.

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[76] Even such careful historians as Michael Bednar (2007) and Cynthia Talbot (2016), who writes: "Although no patron is named in Hammīra Mahā*kāvya*, typically the patron of this type of dynastic history belonged to the same lineage as the text's protagonist" (p.56).

[77] Sreenivasan (2002: 287-8). Emphasis added.

[78] Sheldon Pollock's book (2006) on the strong connection between the production of courtly literature (*kāvya*) and power (*rājya*) has been very influential in shaping socio-political readings of these works. See, for example, Kapadia (2014) on the legitimizing function of two fifteenth-century regional Sanskrit works; and Sreenivasan (2014) for the political significance of vernacular warrior tales at hinterland courts (14^{th}-16^{th} c.).

As with Kirtane's selective historiographical lens, recent readings of HMK thus remain oriented towards historiography. Particular episodes, which are of interest to our historiographical questions, are selected from the text to make claims about socio-political realities external to the text. My main contention is that a good understanding of how a complex historical poem like HMK works as literature – how it is framed, structured; how it plays with opposing narrative modes and perspectives, ambiguous imagery, etc. – should not just complement historiographical analysis, but form its basis.

In the absence of fine-grained literary analysis and complete translations, one should be extra careful in picking out and analyzing the 'meaning' of specific episodes. Without understanding their poetic logic or significance in the literary structure as a whole, historical analysis of such episodes might occasionally distort what the poem is actually trying to say or do in the selected fragment. Put differently, we may implicitly reinforce the Orientalist practice of sifting the valuable 'historical information', from the less valuable poetical fancies. The 'poetical chaff' is of course essential to understand how the poet treats the 'information'. Without careful literary analysis of complex literary works, we risk implementing pre-conceived theoretical frameworks on texts that might actually not fit the theory.

Apart from flattening HMK's literary complexity and downplaying the poet's personal voice, recent studies do not adequately address some of the questions that arise from the applied socio-political mode of analysis. What is a poem about the Chauhan dynasty 'doing' in the court of the Tomars? Why would a Tomar king - ruling over the newly established kingdom of Gwalior - sponsor or invite a court poet to present a poem about the heroes from another dynasty? How does the negative portrayal of the heroes' kingship in tragic-historical epics like HMK and many other poems fit in interpretations of such works as legitimizing narratives? These questions prompt my critique of the currently prevalent socio-political interpretations of HMK.

Moreover, recent attempts to connect the poem's content and literariness to its socio-political context tend to be unprecise and over-generalizing.[79] For example, placing Nayacandra's epic against the background of the Tomar's conflict with neighboring kingdoms and sultanates, Michael Bednar argues that in a period where a "fort fell by subterfuge more often than by siege texts such as the Hammīra-Mahā*kāvya* and the Legend of Kānhaḍa De instruct people on the value of loyalty and the danger of betrayal."[80]

I maintain that these are over-generalizations downplaying the specificity of individual works. It disregards how thematically similar texts, like HMK and *Kāṇhaḍade-*

[79] As in Sreenivasan (2002) and Bednar (2007 and 2017, the former overlooking the Gwalior context).
[80] Bednar 2017: 604.

prabandha, or other Hammīra narratives for that matter, are framed differently, and might be treating the same themes or story lines from different, opposing perspectives.[81] I will, for example, demonstrate that Nayacandra's poem clearly questions the value of staying loyal to 'wicked' kings like Hammīra. We will see that the poem doesn't always invite us to side with the perspective held by the heroes themselves. A poem like HMK doesn't really promote or praise the perspective of the tragic heroes, who are typically blind to other perspectives (and the consequences of their foolish actions). Moreover, I will demonstrate in chapter five that it is possible to actually see or hear traces of the Tomar context (and Gwalior) in the poem. It is not unlikely that Nayacandra is deliberately playing an intriguing mirror-game with the present.

In my analysis of the tragic plot, in chapter four, I will stress that HMK alienates the reader from the heroic ideals held by the protagonist. By contrast, Michael Bednar states that the poets of 'battle-narratives' like HMK and *Kānhaḍade-prabandha* invite the reader to act like the protagonists.[82] He explains that the reader

> would have identified with the *nāyaka* [protagonist], hoping for his victory while subconsciously realizing that it could only end in defeat. The poets transformed this defeat into a heroic success by glorifying the *nāyaka*'s death and his prowess on the battlefield, by lauding the means of his death as the epitome of human action, and by highlighting his attainment of liberation and happiness in heaven with wives and *apsaras* (nymphs). The tragic–heroic emplotment retained the tragic expectation while transforming the tragic demise of the protagonist into the triumphalistic and heroic ending.[83]

The kind of heroic transformation described by Bednar, in which tragic defeat is presented as some sort of heroic success, is clearly at the heart of the Hammīra story, and many later Rajput tales. But it is not what Nayacandra's version highlights. HMK, rather, seems to expose this transformation as what *other people* made of Hammīra's story, or as the Chauhan dynasty's own version of the story of their last great ruler. The poem is infused with meta-poetic and meta-historic concerns which have been ignored in historiographical analyses of the poem. I will therefore suggest we can see the eulogistic format as a disguise (*vyāja*), an illustrious but illusionary veil, that *tries* to cover the darker, tragic side of Hammīra's story. But the attentive reader is constantly invited to sees through this guise. The eulogistic format doesn't always fit the tragic content. It

[81] For example, Padmanābha's *Kānhaḍade prabandha* (1455, transl. by Bhatnagar 1991) which recounts the defeat of Kānhaḍade - the Chauhan ruler of Jalor at the hands of Alauddin – is explicit in his concern to praise the dynastic lineage of his patron, a descendent of the Chauhan hero of the poem. The context of composition is therefore significantly different from HMK where we see no explicit concern to link the Chauhan hero to the Tomar patron.

[82] Bednar 2007: 17, 254-5.

[83] Bednar 2007: 254-5.

tends to slip, revealing the darker side of the Chauhan past. There seems to be a purposive interplay between tragic and eulogistic modes, infusing the poem with a playful back-and-forth dynamic. I will highlight how this sense of movement runs parallel with a constant interplay of perspectives. The views of the Chauhan protagonists – who try to justify their heroic deeds and choices – are constantly challenged by the speeches of other characters who think differently about the value of the king's perspective. This includes, for example, the perspective of Hammīra's queens and daughter, who almost urge Hammīra to give up his pride and obsession with fame and honor. I will propose that Nayacandra purposefully exploits and widens the gap between the ideal world of eulogies and the real, historical world of tragedies.

In chapter five I will try to show that one of the dominant concerns of HMK is to question and downplay the significance of what we could call the traditional heroic core of Hammīra's story: the Chauhan king's legendary adherence to his vow of protecting the warrior Mahimāsāhi, a Mongol chief who had fled from the Delhi Sultanate to Ranthambhor. The role of this Mongol, a so-called Neo-Muslim (recent convert to Islam), has been at the centre of recent and ongoing scholarly analysis of the HMK that seeks to nuance earlier religious readings, as in the work of Michael Bednar, or offer Sanskrit perspectives on Sultanate history, as in forthcoming work of Audrey Truschke.[84]

I will push this analysis further by highlighting Nayacandra's somewhat subversive treatment of this core element in HMK. Rather than a Hindu/Rajput/warrior epic of resistance that counters "Muslim epics of conquests" or promotes Rajput values of heroism and loyalty, I suggest that HMK can be read as a playful counter-narrative to stories about heroic resistance themselves, possibly meant to provoke an estrangement from the heroic ideals of "Rajputizing" elites (like the Tomars) and their fascination with famous but – in the poet's vision - utterly foolish historical kings like Hammīra, Pṛthvīrāja and others.[85] By paying close attention to the framing of Nayacandra's poem and by taking seriously his own claim as to the newness of his poem, I will argue that HMK can be read as a playful engagement with more popular, overtly heroic versions of the Hammīra legend, of which only fragments are extant, but to which Nayacandra at the end of his poem refers to as a wide-spread "tradition of poetry" (*kāvya-paramparām,* 14.1).

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[84] See Bednar's recent article "Mongol, Muslim, Rajput" (2017) for a discussion of this character. I thank Audrey Truschke for sharing her unpublished work with me.

[85] Such a critique seems also implicit in Nayandra's *Rambhāmañjarī*, a play in the rare *saṭṭaka* genre about king Jayacandra of Kannauj, the famous rival of Pṛthvīrāja who was also defeated by Shahabudin Muhammad Ghori. It is edited with an English introduction and translation by Poddar (1976). Like his rival Pṛthvīrāja in the *rāso* tradition, Jayacandra's defeat is typically linked to his addiction to sensual pleasure – which is precisely the topic of Nayacandra's play. A recent study of the play is included in Melinda Fodor's PhD dissertation (2017) on the *saṭṭaka* genre. I have briefly discussed the ironic treatment of his story by Nayacandra in my Master thesis on HMK (2014: p 56-57).

By referring to such a response as 'playful' I emphasize the creative way in which Nayacandra somewhat deceitfully adopts the formal, stylistic and thematic characteristics of the genre of triumphant biography (*carita*), but in fact bends the genre's conventions to do something new and challenging. He seems only to pretend that his poetic project is about glorifying the heroic achievements of Hammīra. The eulogistic format is only the glorious guise that the reader is supposed to unveil or look through. Similar to Heidi Pauwels' observations about Viṣṇudās' *Pāṇḍava-carita*, composed at the Gwalior court a generation later than HMK, I will highlight that the text reveals a strong concern to expose the fatal self-deluding tendency of virile heroism.[86] Additionally, by using the term playful I want to stress that the tone of the poem is not cynical or moralistic but remains light throughout HMK. The poet's zoomed-out and overtly tragic vision of the Chauhans' past leaves space for a playful lightheartedness, a gentle laughing down on the foolish acts of historical heroes, who after all lived and died more than a century before Nayacandra presented his new poem on Hammīra at the Gwalior court.

Despite critiquing and nuancing earlier socio-politically textured readings, and their historiographic goals, I have also been inspired by many of their insights. Thus, regarding the theme of HMK as an innovative text, I pick up on the concluding observations in Michael Bednar's thesis, where he suggests that

> the *Hammīra Mahākāvya* was actually a proto–vernacular text, transitioning from the previously dominant tradition of composition in Sanskrit to an increasingly prominent tradition of composition in vernacular language. A study of vernacular literary traditions and the presence or absence of tragedy in these literary works before the fifteenth century should reveal whether the introduction of the tragic–heroic emerged in the fifteenth century due to certain social circumstances or whether such an emplotment previously existed in these literatures. In the end, it seems more prudent to categorize the *Hammīra Mahākāvya* as a Sanskrit *mahākāvya* in the fifteenth–century vernacular tradition.[87]

The label of Sanskrit HMK as a 'proto-vernacular text' is an interesting point, but also worth nuancing since the poem remains deeply rooted in the Sanskrit literary tradition. Particularly interesting is Bednar's observation that the innovative "tragic–heroic emplotment" of HMK and the slightly later *Kānhaḍade-prabandha* (1455) of Padmanābha "entered the metahistory of fifteenth–century texts to become the dominant emplotment of the Rajput tale."[88] As explained before, I believe it is possible to push this insight further

[86] Pauwels (2020) links this to the central role played by the rash and virile Pāṇḍava brother Bhīma in this vernacular *Mahābhārata*. The character of Bhīma also forms an important point of comparison in Nayacandra's HMK, see my brief discussion of the symbolic significance of Hammīra's general "Bhīmasiṃha" in chapter four.

[87] Bednar 2007: 266.

[88] Bednar 2007: 254-5.

and adjust it. I will propose that the tragic emplotment of the Rajput tale – with a plot culminating in the *jauhar* of the women - is not only first fully developed in these two texts, rather, it appears to start with the story of Hammīra itself. Accordingly, it is Nayacandra's Sanskrit epic of Hammīra which may have paved the way for elaborate *literary* reworkings of Rajput tales in the vernacular. I will occasionally suggest that Padmanābha, the author of *Kānhaḍade-prabandha,* was familiar, and even inspired by Nayacandra's Sanskrit epic.

1.5 Toward a sympathetic understanding of historical *kāvya*

Let me finally put all this in a more broader research context. The result of my research can be understood as an engagement with two important scholarly trends to which this dissertation attempt to make an appeal. Broadly speaking, these fall into the – partly overlapping - categories of South Asian literary history (the work of 'literary critics/philologists') and cultural history (the work of 'historians').

As is evident from the discussion above, this dissertation is meant in the first place as a reappraisal or revaluation of a remarkable literary work in the history of Sanskrit poetry - with an emphasis on the relevance of revalidating its literary merit and value. My reading of Nayacandra's HMK as a highly innovative work, worthy as an object of interest in its own right, is deeply inspired by recent efforts of scholars to lay the foundations for a much-needed sympathetic history of Sanskrit 'belles lettres' (*kāvya*). Thus, the recent important volume edited by Yigal Bronner, David Shulman and Gary Tubb called *Innovation and Turning Points: toward a history of kāvya literature* (2014) responds to still prevalent (Orientalist) ideas about the gradual 'decline' of Sanskrit poetry after reaching its zenith around the fourth century CE with the pinnacle of Sanskrit poets: Kālidāsa. Rather than offering a new, comprehensive history of *kāvya* literature, *Innovation and Turning Points* presents a chronologically ordered compilation of close, fine-grained literary readings of poems by seminal figures who were regarded by the tradition itself as daring innovators. In this way, the book gives an entirely new outlook on a remarkable literary tradition that managed to renew itself over a period spanning almost two millennia, across the South Asian continent and far beyond. Innovation in this literary tradition therefore almost becomes a somewhat miraculous achievement, made possible through daringly creative efforts of poets who were always keen on emulating and surpassing the poets of old by finding new ways to appeal to and challenge its audiences.

It is worth elaborating briefly on the conditions which necessitate the ongoing project to thoroughly rewrite the history of *kāvya* literature, to which this dissertation aims to

contribute. The introductory essay states that we may be "generations away" from an actual history of this tradition because most texts have never been read closely in modern times.[89] This, the essay explains, has partly something to do with the 'difficulty' of the poetry composed after Kālidāsa (fourth century). Generations of modern scholars have experienced later poems as distasteful or decadent, a sign of the gradual decay of literary tradition that fails to creatively renew itself. The articles in *Innovation and Turning points* powerfully overthrows this problematic image crafted by literary critics of "so-called histories of Sanskrit poetry."[90] The perceived difficulty, the editors explain, in fact entails a remarkable literary complexity:

> The obvious difficulty of much Sanskrit poetry has generally been viewed as an insuperable flaw or a repellent barrier, blinding such critics to much of what this poetry is about. Dense layering effects, the superimposition of one or more levels on another, complex imagery, establishing relations among superficially discrete entities, subtle suggestion – all these lie at the heart of the Sanskrit poetic enterprise.[91]

For several reasons the sub-genre of historical poetry has suffered even more from generations of literary critics, both South Asian and Western, who have pejoratively judged 'historical *kāvya*' against superior western and/or modern tastes and models. First, since the popularity of historical themes in Sanskrit *kāvya* becomes dominant only in the second millennium, historical *kāvya* falls victim to the prejudice of 'older is better', which also happened to later non-historical poems, as noted in the introduction to *Innovation and Turning Points*.[92] Second, since the genre of historical *kāvya* comes into existence as patron-centered poetry, it tends to be denounced as 'royal flattery'. Importantly, this is not necessarily a modern or western critique. As explained above, it repeatedly resurfaces in the tradition of historical poetry itself, which not only thematizes the 'problem', but overthrows the critique. And finally, our poor understanding of historical *kāvya* is clearly connected to the way generations of scholars have classified these works as presenting an 'uncritical' mix of poetic fancy and historical 'information'.[93] In short, our understanding of 'historical *kāvya*' suffers from a long scholarly tradition that has

[89] Bronner et al. 2014: 26.

[90] ibid. p. 2.

[91] ibid. p. 14.

[92] ibid. p. 2.

[93] Standard histories of Sanskrit literature always juxtapose historical *kāvya* with the western model of 'serious' historiography, casting the poets as royal flatters who are indifferent to truth. For example, in Keith's words (1920: 155) the historical poetry of the seminal figure Bilhaṇa is characterized by an "irritating but epic vagueness" and the "usual diversion from serious matters". I have noted earlier that this is also, partly, reinforced in the more recent work of Siegried Lienhard (1984).

rendered texts like HMK – to put it somewhat boldly - into being mixtures of tedious, difficult poetry, royal flattery, and uncritical history.

As noted above, in the past few decades, scholars have made serious attempts to counter the problematic Orientalist claim that South Asia, before British colonialization, didn't produce meaningful historiographical traditions (in a Western sense). Many scholars have been offering novel approaches to broaden up our understanding of what constitutes 'history' or historical literature, drawing attention to different, shifting historical sensibilities, dialogues with Persianate historiographical traditions, etc. This dissertation largely refrains from theoretical discussions about what counts as history and what not. Occasionally I will touch on some of the issues raised in such studies. It is nevertheless hoped that my reading of HMK as historical *poetry* may be of value to scholars interested in theorizing South Asian forms of historical literature. Although I'm mostly interested in literary issues, I will engage with the recent trend to nuance earlier interpretations of historical narratives from the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal period as expressive of Hindu-Muslim hostility. Most recent readings of HMK are thus rooted in one of these scholarly trends.[94] It is hoped that my literary reading will deepen the insights regarding the representation of cultural others in this poem, a theme that is clearly at the heart of HMK.

As evident from the above discussion, this dissertation is also conceived as a response to the historiographical focus itself, and the applied socio-political mode of analysis and 'memory studies' approach, which tends to downplay the crucial role of the poet as a creative individual, who actively plays with the narrative 'stuff' that makes up historical and cultural memory.

1.6 Note on the editions and manuscripts

I have used the edition by Jinavijaya Muni (the reprint of 1993), which is based on the same manuscript from the first edition by Kirtane (1879), carrying the date 1485 CE (1542 V.S). The colophon indicates that it is written by a Jain named Nayahaṃsa in *śrī-perojapura,* Firozpur, likely a city named after Firoz Shah Tughluq (r. 1351-88). This is

[94] As in Bednar (2007 and 2017), Sreenivasan (2002), Thapar (2005: 116-131), Talbot (2016), in work in book-projects in progress by Audrey Truschke and Aditya Malik, and in a forthcoming article by Cynthia Talbot, titled "Turks, warriors, and conquerors: Narratives of Hindu-Muslim encounters between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries". I thank these scholars for sharing their unpublished work with me.

perhaps the modern Firozpur in the Punjab, close to the border with Pakistan. This Nayahaṃsa identifies himself as belonging to the same sect (*gaccha*) of Nayacandra, the *gaccha* of Śrīkṛṣnarṣī. Jinavijaya's edition lists variants from an older manuscript preserved in a Jain manuscript library in Koṭā from 1429 CE (1486 V.S.), written by a certain Puruṣottama, who calls himself the "son of the scholar Guṇarāja" (*paṇḍita-guṇarāja-putreṇa*).[95] There is no explicit Jain connection here.

It is worth mentioning that Jinavijaya asserted the manuscript from the copy of Nayahaṃsa from 1485 CE - which is the basis for Kirtane's and his own edition - to be older than the Koṭā manuscript from 1429. He argues that the date 1542 V.S. (1485 CE) must contain a writing error, and that it should have been 1452 V.S., noting that the copyist Nayahaṃsa must have accidently switched the number 4 and 5.[96] Jinavijaya comes up with this theory because the copyist Nayahaṃsa speaks of himself as a pupil of Jayasiṃha Sūri, whom he assumes to be the same as the guru of the poet Nayacandra himself. But this is clearly a different, and later Jayasiṃha Sūri, since we know that HMK was composed during the rule of Vīrama Tomar (1402-1423). Jinavijaya thus places the composition of HMK before 1452 V.S., that is in 1385 CE. This partly explains the unprecise contextualization of Nayacandra's HMK in recent historiographical research, which has often placed his work 'somewhere' in the late fourteenth century or middle of the fifteenth century.[97]

The edition of Jinavijaya also includes an anonymous, undated and incomplete Sanskrit commentary on HMK, which is also connected to Nayacandra's *gaccha*. This commentary, titled *Hammīramahākāvyadīpikā* ("Light on HMK"), unfortunately breaks off in the middle of the fifth canto.

I have often chosen for the variants of the older Koṭā manuscript, which are sometimes corroborated by the version available to the commentator, and by another undated and incomplete manuscript I managed to obtain from the Rajasthan Oriental Research Institute in Jodhpur, which breaks off in the beginning of canto four.

Finally, there are at least two other unedited, and incomplete manuscripts, which I didn't manage to obtain.[98] There is one manuscript at the Asiatic Society of Bengal in Calcutta, from 1470 CE (1527 V.S.), copied by Guṇabhadra, a pupil of Padmasāgar Miśra, who was also connected to the Śrīkṛṣṇarṣi-gaccha. And there is an incomplete manuscript in a collection in London, from the Royal Asiatic Society, from the archive of the colonial British administrator, colonel James Tod, who may have used it for his history of

[95] Jinavijaya 1993: 4. There is a picture of the last folio included in Jinavijaya's edition.

[96] ibid. p. 3-4.

[97] As in Sreenivasan 2002 and Bednar 2007.

[98] I thank Richard Salomon for directing my attention to these other manuscripts at a conference and reading session at Washington University, Seattle (14-15th September 2017).

Rajasthan.[99] The latter manuscript appears to have been copied in the late eighteenth century – perhaps for Tod himself -, from an earlier defective manuscript.

[99] In his "Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan" (Vol II, 1832: 452) he says that he has translated two works with the help of his Jain guru, a "Hamir Rásá" and a "Hamir Cavyá", which he both ascribes to the hand of Hammīra's supposed bard Śārṅgadhara. This is also briefly discussed in the preface to HMK's first edition (Kirtane 1879: i).

Chapter 1 Listening for ambiguity and intertextual play: HMK's 'eulogistic' frame

1.1 "Shaken by a play of rashness": concluding a tragic poem

How to frame a poem about a tragic hero, while adopting the eulogistic format of biographical 'great poem', a *mahākāvya*? There may have been no antecedents of a *mahākāvya,* in which the plot revolves around the tragic defeat of the main hero. In this chapter I will present a close reading of the prologue to explore how Nayacandra introduces the tragic subject of his poem, showing how many of the major thematic elements are already introduced. Before starting with the beginning of the poem, I will present a close reading of one of the final verses. It will help us to understand what happens in the prologue, and indeed throughout the poem itself. This is because the verse in question, 14.43, playfully reaches back to one of HMK's central poetic concerns: the deep intertextual engagement with the poets of old, especially perhaps with Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa,* while also thematizing this intertextual concern as a way to infuse his poem with a restless and playful back and forth movement. Moreover, if there is one quasi-tragic *kāvya* precursor to Nayacandra's HMK, it is indeed to be found in Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa.*

Let me therefore start by elaborating on the pertinence of *Raghuvaṃśa* "The Raghu dynasty" as an intertextual model for Nayacandra's great poem on the Chauhan dynasty. Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa* forms somewhat of an exception in the history of *kāvya* literature for its less ideal tragic ending. It thus ends with the death of king Agnivarṇa, who wasted away because of his addiction to sensual pleasure. Csaba Dezso has recently discussed how the death of Agnivarṇa may fit into the poem's concern with exploring the fatal effects of addiction – also a recurrent theme in HMK -, while indicating how the less ideal tragic ending also troubled later commentators, who speculated that a canto may have gone

lost.[1] Interestingly indeed, the less ideal tragic- or truncated - ending of *Raghuvaṃśa* seems not to be taken up in later *kāvya* literature.[2] But it can be said to resonate in Nayacandra's poem about the Chauhan dynasty, and the fall of its last ruler.

There are different ways to look at the 'tragic' ending of Raghuvaṃśa, and how it fits in the poem's aesthetic goals as a whole. Especially intriguing is David Shulman's reading of *Raghuvaṃśa*, in his article "Waking Aja", where he links the poem's apparent truncated ending to Kālidāsa's concern with modelling a certain vision of temporality, and the dangerous 'temporal gaps' that repeatedly open up in the poem, threatening the continuation of the Raghu dynasty. Later, in the third chapter, I will elaborate on Nayacandra's concern with temporality, drawing extensively on Shulman's understanding of the *suprabhātam* "good morning" poems in Kālidāsa's work, and the thematic significance of Royal Fortune. For the purpose of this chapter, I want to already draw attention to Shulman's analysis of the intertwining of thematic and meta-poetic levels, with regard to the all-important topic of Royal Fortune. Great royal dynasties, like the 'mythological' Raghus, or the 'historical' Chauhans, are indeed constantly in danger of losing their grip on Royal Fortune or Splendor (*rājya-śrī*), the symbolic wife of kings. This is how Shulman explains the meta-poetic rationale behind the episodes like the intervention of royal poets or bards who attempt to awaken 'sleepy' kings with their 'good morning' verses:

> This royal family, precisely because of its centrality and prominence, has the task of "capturing" and "holding" this notoriously elusive and fickle goddess, which is to say – of awakening her, or of activating or reactivating her presence, which tends to atrophy, to stray, to wane. Very probably the royal poet's task can be defined in these terms.[3]

Throughout the next chapters I will highlight that HMK similarly reads as a history about the difficult - and vain! - struggle of the Chauhans to keep hold of the 'fickle' goddess Royal Fortune. Fortune's notorious 'fickleness' (*cāpala*) is clearly a central theme in Nayacandra's epic, as it is in many other literary texts about kingship. Despite a gap of more than a thousand years Kālidāsa's influential masterpiece on the Raghu dynasty still provided an important model for Nayacandra's own epic on the dynasty of the Chauhans,

[1] Dezso 2014, in an article titled 'We do not fully understand the learned poet's intention in not composing a twentieth canto': Addiction as a Structuring Theme in the Raghuvaṃśa".

[2] An exception might be Kalhaṇa's mid-twelfth-century *Rājataraṅginī*, whose tragic poetics of decay and despair McCrea (2013) links to the text's emulation of the *Mahābhārata* as a literary model. Arguably, like the *Rājataraṅginī*, Nayacandra's poem did something rather new and challenging by defying the long-established aesthetic ideal of happy endings in Sanskrit *kāvya*.

[3] Shulman 2014: 44-5.

as it continued to do for many other post-1000 AD poems.[4] However, the time gap of more than a millennium makes itself felt too in Nayacandra's poem. As the title of Nayacandra's poem indicates, the great poem of Hammīra (*Hammīra-mahākāvya*) is not only about the greatness of a dynasty (*vaṃśa*) and the problems with royal succession. Nayacandra's poem is ultimately about the Chauhan dynasty's *last* hero, whose death our poet presents as the *complete* destruction of this famous and once powerful dynasty. We will see that Hammīra is presented as the tragic endpoint of a long history which HMK models as a gradual process of 'falling asleep'. This makes the tragic ending of HMK radically different from its intertextual model. Even though *Raghuvaṃśa* ends with the death of the Raghu king Agnivarṇa, he may not have been the last. The poem thus concludes with a verse about how his widow, the queen, is pregnant, and bears the king's seed in her womb. In the words of Shulman, the poem's ending bears the promise of the dynasty's rebirth.[5] He thus explains that this ending aligns with Kālidāsa's concern with modelling time as an uneven, though rhythmic pulsation and *regenerative* process.

HMK, by contrast, is much more tragic in that sense. But I will show that it does invite the reader to think of Hammīra's death as the start of a regenerative poetic process, stimulating 'learned men' to create a 'tradition of poetry' (*kāvya-paramparām,* 14.1), as he puts, with a wry sense of irony, in the opening verse of the final canto. It is clear that from this tradition of poetry, his own, new poem of Hammīra, is meant to stand out as the 'true' version of Hammīra's legend. Keeping this in mind, we can finally turn to the significance of the often-overlooked verse about HMK's context of composition. The verse reflects on his new poem of Hammīra as the result of what appears to have been a literary challenge, held at the court of Vīrama Tomar (the king of Gwalior, between 1402-1423).[6] It is here where Nayacandra speaks of a playful 'shaking' movement underlying his whole poetic endeavor:

> "At this time, no one will create a poem
> resembling the poetry of the poets of old."
> This is what was said by the courtiers
> at the assembly of king Vīrama Tomar.
> With his mind shaken by a play of rashness

[4] Satya Vrat, in his "Glimpses of Jaina Sanskrit Mahā*kāvya*s" (2006), mentions *Raghuvaṃśa*'s influence to be the case for nearly all the Jain *mahākāvyas* discussed by him (p.14).

5 Shulman 2014: 62.

[6] I will elaborate in chapter five on the significance of this contest against the background of the socio-historical and literary context of early fifteenth century North India. Nayacandra's statement may be reflective of the emergence of the vernacular as a medium of literary expression, but it is also just a common topos in Sanskrit literature. And this may also be the point of the verse: he is playing with Sanskrit literary conventions.

arising from *that*
the poet Nayacandra created
this erotic, heroic and marvelous
new poem of king Hammīra.[7]

Nayacandra explains how he was - quite literally - moved to create a new poem on king Hammīra because his mind was "shaken by a play of rashness" (*cāpala-keli-dolita*), arising or originating from *that* (*tad-bhū*). But from what exactly?[8] This tremulous movement appears to have been caused by the (supposedly) outrageous claim at the Tomar court, that no one will create a poem like the poets of old. This (shocking?) statement had disturbed the poet's mind. It appears to have literally 'shaken' Nayacandra into making his great and new Sanskrit epic of Hammīra.[9]

Let me unpack this imagery. First of all, at the heart of this verse is an allusion to a famous introductory verse in Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa* (1.9), where the author playfully ridicules the limits of his own intellect to compose a poem about the great rulers of the Raghu dynasty. Kālidāsa explains that it is rashness (*cāpala*) that moved him to perform such an impossible feat.[10] Nayacandra thus adopts Kālidāsa's self-ridicule to explain how he was similarly moved by rashness to take up the extremely difficult task of composing a Sanskrit epic poem like the poets of old. But in fact, the allusion itself – and therefore the whole statement – *is* the proof of Nayacandra's success in performing this difficult endeavor. It shows his skill in composing a poem like the poets of old, who always playfully engaged with the works of their predecessors, often with parodic features. In fact, Kālidāsa's famous introductory verse is also alluded to in Nayacandra's own

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[7] *kāvya*ṃ pūrva-kaver na *kāvya*-sadṛśaṃ kaścid vidhātâdhunê-
ty ukte tomara-vīrama-kṣitipateḥ sāmājikaiḥ saṃsadi |
tad-bhū-cāpala-keli-dolita-manāḥ śṛṅgāra-vīrâdbhutaṃ
cakre *kāvya*m idaṃ hamīra-nṛpateḥ navyaṃ nayênduḥ kaviḥ ||14. 43||

[8] I believe the verse is purposefully ambiguous about the meaning of 'that'. Literally it says that the poet Nayacandra was "endowed with a mind that was shaken by a play of rashness, *arising from that*" (*tad-bhū-cāpala-keli-dolita-manāḥ*). In the context of the verse the "that" (*tad*) most probably refers to what the courtiers of king Vīrama Tomar proclaimed. But it is also possible to take the word *tad* to mean "therefore", as separate from this long compound. The word *bhū* would then acquire its common meaning as "earth, world". It would mean that Nayacandra's mind was shaken by the play of rashness *of the world,* which moved Nayacandra to compose his Hammīra poem. Or it may actually refer to the 'play of rashness' arising from *him,* where *tad* may refer to Vīrama Tomar himself. I elaborate on the possibility of this connotation in chapter five.

[9] It is worth noting that the verse is part of a larger set in which Nayacandra playfully defends his poem against the (future) critic, mocking them for trying to find faults and ungrammatical Sanskrit speech in Nayacandra's work. He explains, for example, that even the poems of Kālidāsa are full of faults (14.38). This itself is a common practice among poets. His statement about his act of rashness is thus part of the poet's long 'apology' to the future critic.

[10] I further discuss this verse in the fourth section of this chapter.

introduction (1.10), again with a playful twist, as I explain in the next section. It is as if Nayacandra at the end of his poem again reminds his audience of one of the hallmarks of his poem: the constant intertextual engagement with earlier poets of the Sanskrit literary tradition. Nayacandra of course not just passively emulates the poets of old but actively plays with a great number of intertexts, in the process changing, intensifying, and inverting well-known imagery, genre-conventions, and narrative templates.

Importantly, Nayacandra thus only playfully pretends that his poetic endeavor resulted from *his own* inconsiderate rashness. The syntactic flexibility of such long compounds allows the slightly pejorative 'play of rashness' (*cāpala*) to apply to Vīrama's courtiers, or to Vīrama himself (*tad* as "him"). By implication, the 'message' itself thus may sound as a dig to Nayacandra's presumed Tomar patron. His courtiers had dared to make the claim - presumably intolerable or ridiculous - that no one *will* compose a Sanskrit epic at the present time - *adhunā,* the early fifteenth century. But he proved them wrong. Therefore, in some sense, the verse speaks about the inconsiderateness of Vīrama's courtiers. Their rash assertion caused the (feigned?) emotional disturbance in the mind of a gifted Sanskrit poet like Nayacandra. The verse therefore doesn't bestow praise on the Tomar king and his court. He tried to 'defeat' them in the context of a literary challenge. In addition, Nayacandra deliberately presents himself as the supreme scholar-poet and spiritual leader, mastering the essence of all branches of knowledge (*sarva-śāstraîka-binduḥ,* 14.26). In this regard, it is worth quoting how Velcheru Narayan Rao speaks about the courtly culture of competition in medieval India, and the (new) ideal of the scholar-poet:

> A poet who was not also a superior scholar was not recognized as a good poet. Scholarship was determined in competition with other scholars of the king's court. A king was expected to have a number of competent scholars in his court who could dispute with and defeat visiting scholar-poets who come with a desire to conquer them.[11]

I will examine this aspect of greater length in chapter five, where I also address Nayacandra's boldness in presenting himself as being on top of the court, unaffected by the demands of a patron. Here I want to suggest that there is much more to Nayacandra's statement that his mind was "shaken by a play of rashness'". It is certainly not a coincidence that Nayacandra literally connects Kālidāsa's *cāpala* "rashness, fickleness, inconsiderateness" to the word play (*keli*) and the shaking or swinging back-and-forth movement (*dolita*) denoted by all kinds of words to express play-activity - as brilliantly

[11] Rao 1992: 194.

theorized in Johan Huizinga's seminal study on play.[12] I would argue that this 'shaking' movement indeed underlies the poet's vision on poetry itself. Moreover, it is not unlikely that Nayacandra is literally playing with the common idea that the poet's own mood - often prior to his composition - manifests itself in the poem. It happened to the primordial poet Vālmīki, who, struck by grief (*śoka*) when seeing a hunter shoot a bird – separating it from her lover -, transferred his sorrowful emotional experience into the first verse (*śloka*) of the Rāmāyaṇa.[13]

Nayacandra appears to have similarly transferred his emotional disturbance into his poetry - or pretends that it happened so. In HMK almost every theme is subjected to the alluring logic and beauty of play (and dance), expressed through words like *keli, krīḍā, līlā, vilāsa, nṛtya,* etc. - and the free, unrestrained, back-and-forth motion inherent to the notion of play.[14] And this might also apply to Nayacandra's conception of what good poetry is and does, as in the verse from his *Rambhāmañjarī,* quoted at the beginning of the introduction. There is indeed something about Nayacandra's poetry that makes both the heads of the characters and audience shake (*ghūrṇayati*), not only in the conventional sense of making the listeners nod their heads spontaneously in approval.[15]

This finally brings me to the significance of the title of this dissertation: 'Shaking Hammīra'. It is not only meant as a nod to Shulman's highly insightful article on *Raghuvaṃśa,* called "Waking Aja", but as an allusion to this verse in which Nayacandra himself playfully alludes to Kālidāsa's important intertext. It can be useful to explore the poem's compelling incongruity between the eulogistic format and tragic content in terms of a rhythmic, back-and-forth movement between 'eulogy' and 'tragedy', not as genres of

[12] Namely, in his wonderful book and now classic *Homo Ludens* (1938). The historian and cultural-critic Huizinga, who started his career as a scholar of Sanskrit literature (with his PhD dissertation on the *vidūṣaka* "jester" in Sanskrit theater) is perhaps the first to emphasize or at least theorize the idea that an effortless, free, and repetitive 'back-and-forth' movement is inherent to the concept of play, showing how this is the case in words for play in both Indo-European languages – listing several Sanskrit words - and non-European languages like Japanese (in chapter two "Conceptie en uitdrukking van het begrip spel in de taal").

[13] Accordingly, the dominant mood or taste (*rasa*) of the Rāmāyaṇa is believed to be that of *karuṇā,* pitiful compassion, derived from the emotion of grief, see for example the discussion of this point in Pollock 2016: 5, discussing the topic of 'Rasa in the Poet'. Pollock (2016:27) argues it could be translated as the tragic *rasa*, for it corresponds well with what the emotional effect associated with western tragic writing.

[14] In my translation of these words I will try to preserve the connection to the concept of play. I believe the conceptual overlap is central to the poet's poetic vision. Gary Tubb has observed something similar in his article "Poetry and Play in Kavikarṇapūra's play within the play" (2014: 693).

[15] I thank Yigal Bronner for making me understand that the basic meaning of the metaphor of 'shaking' as nodding in approval. The imagery of shaking heads recurs at two pivotal episodes in Nayacandra's poem, in two *suprabhātam* verses, in the eighth canto (discussed in chapter three in section 4.2 "Shaking heads at dawn") and in the thirteenth canto (discussed in chapter four in section 5.6 "Waking the sleepless").

literature but as narrative modes, which alternate consistently throughout the poem within the over-arching frame of a eulogistic biography (*carita*). I will suggest we can see it as a game of balance in which the eulogistic frame never completely breaks down. I will explore how the back-and-forth movement itself aligns with many of the structuring themes of the poem, like the 'shaking' (*capala, cañcala, tarala*, etc.) unsteadiness, restlessness and recklessness of kings and warriors. The whole poem indeed revolves around the difficulty of maintaining Royal Fortune, who is typically blamed for her notorious fickleness (*cāpala*). Like in Shulman's reading of *Raghuvaṃśa*, I will show that in HMK too this has something to do with the elusive force of Time (*kāla*), and the related notion of fate (*vidhi, daiva*, etc), which are also said to play and move back and forth throughout the poem.[16] Importantly, this playful movement also constitutes the movement of poetry itself, its uneven, restless and meandering flow through opposing narrative modes and perspectives, and a great variety of intertexts.[17]

In short, a playful back-and-forth movement appears to express itself as theme, structure, and over-all poetic effect on the reader. Nayacandra's deep concern with intertextual play constitutes one of the main challenges to understand what is 'really' happening throughout the poem. We will already see below, in my reading of the prologue, that in some cases the influence of or modelling on other texts might border on being parodic. But not always. We can understand the many intertextual nods or allusions really as play, contributing to the overall multidirectional movement within Nayacandra's poetry, which never fully comes to rest. It is really some kind of poetic game of unsteadiness or restlessness (*cāpala-keli*), which Nayacandra plays with his audience, as in the verse discussed above. We will see that the reader's attention is made to shift between Chauhan history and other story templates, or between Nayacandra's own poetry and the verses of other poets. This is not just intertextual play, for the sake of play, or for showing off erudition. I will suggest that we can see the resonances and dissonances with other texts as part of the poet's set of strategies to make the audience alert and demand a deeper involvement with the traditional Hammīra's story.

To conclude this introductory section, it is worth quoting the final verse of HMK (14.46), in which he evokes two earlier models, the famous late twelfth-century poet Śrīharṣa (associated with the court of Jayacandra of Kannauj), and the early thirteenth-

[16] as in 3.65 (*vidhi-**vilasita**-yogād*) and 8.128 (*moha-**lalitaiḥ**...kālaś cauro **bhramati***).

[17] Nayacandra also explicitly thematizes this 'restless' movement of poetry. For example, anticipating his explanation why a Jain monk excels in writing erotic verses, Nayacandra explains that he enjoys the grace of the goddess of Speech: "it is she alone indeed who bestows (poetry's) lofty playfulness, endowed with the virtuous freshness of beautiful women (lit. "those with restless eyes") (*dhatte **lālityam** uccaiḥ khalu **capala**-dṛśāṃ puṇya-tāruṇyam eva,* 14.29).

century Jain poet Amaracandra (associated with the literary circle of Vastupāla in Patan). Playing on the literal meaning of their names, we learn in conclusion that:[18]

> Having drunk the nectar of poetry,
> arising from the lotus-mouth of Śrī Nayacandra,
> who indeed would not see clearly before his eyes
> the poet Amaracandra (– the Immortal Moon)?
> When he first reaches Immortality
> there is not a slight blockade.
> Unable to resist himself, he should run forth again
> whirling about on the garland of Pleasure –(Śrī-)Harṣa.[19]

The idea of this verse is also echoed in a verse by the copyist Nayahaṃsa (in 1485 CE, at least seventy or sixty years after the composition of HMK) who says that Nayacandra's poetry is a wonderful elixir (*rasāyanam adbhūtam*): it makes these famous poets *come alive* (*jīvante*) (verse 3). Unique about Nayacandra's poetry is that he manages to combine the "the graceful (or dancing) style" (*lālityam*) of Amaracandra and the "twisted style" (*vakrimā*) of Śrīharṣa (verse 4).[20] The verse above suggests that such an extraordinary poetic experience is hard to resist (*dur-vāraḥ*). It happens effortlessly, without restraint, an essential attribute of the playful movement denoted by *lālitya,* and even the word *vibhrama,* the pleasure of whirling or moving back and forth, confusingly, on a garland of pleasure (*harṣa*) or on the poetry of Śrīharṣa. As I explained in the introduction, thanks to the efforts of scholars like Yigal Bronner and David Shulman, we know that composing poetry in the second 'vernacular millennium' means a deep, creative and playful engagement with the poems from the earlier masters of the Sanskrit literary tradition. Often this happens in dialogue with the poets from the newly emerging vernacular literatures, who unmistakably included the Hammīra legend in their repertoire.[21]

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[18] The verse may be an addition by a reader/copyist of HMK. The earlier Koṭā manuscript does not include this verse. However, it does appear in Nayacandra's play *Rambhāmañjarī,* as a verse about how the poet had described himself earlier, see v.1.16 in edition of Poddar (1976).

[19] pītvā śrī-nayacandra-vaktra-kamalâvirbhāvi-kāvyâmṛtaṃ
ko nāmâmaracandram eva purataḥ sākṣān na paśyed dhruvam |
ādāv eva bhaved asāv amaratā cet tasya no bādhikā
durvāraḥ punar eṣa dhāvatutamāṃ harṣâvalī-vibhramaḥ ||14.46||

[20] I give a full translation of the verse at the end of the first section of the conclusion. For my translation of l*ālityam* as 'dancing style' I'm indebted to the translation of *lālitya* as "dancing" in a verse about the style of Daṇḍin, quoted in the introduction of the volume *Innovation and Turning Points* 2014 (Bronner et al.): 4.

[21] Bronner and Shulman (2006), responding to Pollocks thesis about the 'death of Sanskrit' in the vernacular millennium. It is worth noting that Nayacandra included a vernacular bardic song on Jayacandra in his *Rambhāmañjarī,* identified as old literary Marāṭhī, see Poddar 1976: 6. In chapter five I reflect on the emergence of the Hammīra tradition itself.

1.2 A playful and discriminating Splendor (Śrī): introducing a tragic poem

Opening verses provide a good starting point to explore what a literary text 'intends' to say. This may sound obvious, or needless to emphasize. Curiously, however, most modern scholarly analyses of Nayacandra's great poem of Hammīra have paid little attention to HMK's prologue. We can nevertheless expect any author of a literary work to put extra effort in the opening lines of his work. After all, such lines must try to seize the attention of the reader. The prologue, or indeed the very first verse, may already give a glimpse of what the literary work will be about. In the next sections I will highlight how HMK's prologue – the first twenty-six verses - already introduces most of the major motifs, thematic 'questions' and axes of tension. A close consideration of these verses allows us to understand and appreciate HMK as a carefully constructed aesthetic whole. The alluring ambiguities in the prologue clearly set the tone for the rest of the poem. And since the epilogue (canto fourteen) purposefully returns to what is said or suggested in these verses, a careful reading of HMK's opening is necessary to understand how the poem comes full circle at the end. Clearly, Kirtane's derogatory claim about HMK's "very uneven" narrative structure is misleading. It made him discard the 'poetical chaff' from the valuable historical information.[22] The historical narrative may be uneven – purposefully so -, but the poem itself is beautifully structured.

We are drawn into Nayacandra's poetic world through a set of carefully crafted benedictive verses. They introduce the reader to the poet's skill in the fascinating art of simultaneous narration (*śleṣa*). This allows the Jain author of the poem to simultaneously evoke the foremost deities from the Hindu pantheon and those of his own tradition, the Jain 'ford-makers' (*tīrthaṅkara*), the spiritual 'conquerors' (*jina*) who have succeeded in crossing the ocean of worldly existence (*saṃsāra*). On the surface, one could say that Nayacandra intends to make an appeal to both a Jain and Hindu audience. It's important, however, to not reduce these verses to being just that. I want to show that Nayacandra's benediction is clearly not just about making a religious point; nor is it just a display of the poet's skill in the art of simultaneous narration - as the benediction is 'footnoted' in Kirtane's influential paraphrase.[23]

In this section I want to stress the relevance of not skipping over the seven verses preceding the introduction of the 'main' subject matter, Hammīra Chauhan. He will be presented – somewhat ambiguously - as the only praiseworthy king of the present age (1.8), *as they say* (*kila,* 1.9). I want to demonstrate how the preceding seven verses already

[22] Kirtane 1879: v.

[23] Kirtane 1879: iv.

invite the reader to be attentive to the ambiguity of poetic speech. We are implicitly urged to not take words of praise at their face value. Nominally these verses 'just' simultaneously evoke the Hindu deities and the Jain saints (1.2-1.6), enclosed by an opening verse about the self (*ātman*) and a 'concluding' verse about Sarasvatī, the riverine goddess of Vedic literature, and Poetic Speech embodied. I will highlight how ultimately *all* these verses make a statement about the extraordinary power of poetry. The craft and experience of poetry is subtly presented as being superior to religious devotion or worship (*bhakti*) as a means to purify and awaken the self (*ātman*). It is Sarasvatī alone who can provide a genuine passage or ford (*tīrtha*) to grasp the multi-faceted nature of reality. The experience of poetry may be 'spiritually' more effective than worshipping the Hindu gods, the Jain 'ford-makers', or indeed historical heroes like Hammīra.

Arguably, the very first verse already contains the 'essence' of the whole poem. The anonymous Jain commentator of the single surviving though incomplete commentary (*dīpikā*) on HMK - "Light on *Hammīramahākāvya*" - stresses its central importance. The short preface ends by stating that we should fix all our attention on the first verse, for it condenses everything that is taught in this world – theoretical, religious, worldly, philosophical and social knowledge, etc. (*śāstra, darśana, puruṣârtha*). Let me therefore start with a translation and elaborate discussion of the first verse. It may be possible to hear the whole range of layers making up the complexity of the poem as a whole: thematic, intertextual, meta-poetic, religious-philosophical, etc. In the space of single verse Nayacandra condenses these levels into a carefully crafted auditive experience.

> What they call the great rise of awareness and bliss
> we always worship its only cause: *that* Supreme Light.
> It is there - in that (light) which wards of darkness -
> that this auspicious Splendor
> like a female goose
> in the pond's purifying water
> plays and plays.[24]

Because of the layered texture and multiple semantic connotations of the original Sanskrit, any translation will fall short to fully express what this opening verse conveys. All the individual elements evoked and implied in this verse - the brilliance, the darkness, the self as the 'Supreme Light' (*paraṃ-jyotis*), the great rise (*udaya*) of awareness and joy, its only cause (*eka-hetum*), a playful Splendor (Śrī), the female goose (*haṃsī*) enjoying herself (*ram*) in the purifying water or pond (*saras*), even the first temporal marker *sadā*

[24] sadā cid-ānanda-mahôdayaîka-hetuṃ paraṃ-jyotir upāsmahe tat |
yasmin śiva-śrīḥ sarasîva haṃsī viśuddhi-kṛd-vāriṇi raṃramīti ||1.1||

'always' – will carry an important structuring function throughout the poem. They are the motifs and symbols holding the poem together as a unified aesthetic whole. They spring forth from a single, carefully constructed verse. And they are deeply and intricately intertwined. Our poet, of course, almost never speaks directly about how exactly these elements intertwine. We are, in other words, invited to explore their connections and fill in the semantic and symbolic values of words like *śiva, śrī, haṃsī* and even *tad* "that".

Most evidently this opening verse addresses the religious-philosophical topic (and problem) of the nature of reality. It raises the important theme of the 'supreme self' (*paramātman*), in relation to the natural make-up of reality, which in mainstream Vedāntic traditions is believed to be eternally conscious and joyful (*cid-ānanda*). Instead of using Jaina specific terminology, Nayacandra chooses to use an arguably more universally applicable Upaniṣadic vocabulary.[25] The absolute self, in its pure and natural state, is thus cast as a bright and shining principle, the "Supreme Light" (*paraṃ-jyotis*), to which we should devote ourselves in an Upaniṣadic fashion. Or rather, we are already "being or sitting near" to it (*upāsmahe*). Nayacandra may be purposefully reinforcing this Upaniṣadic imagery by calling the Supreme Light '*that*' (*tat*). This neuter pronoun, placed emphatically at the end of the first line, may denote the much-discussed relation of the

[25] There seems to be enough common ground between Jaina and Vedāntic traditions to adopt the view that the self (*ātman*), in its pure state, is eternally conscious and blissful. This adaptation of the terminology or imagery of other religious-philosophical traditions is not uncommon by Jain authors. Jeffrey Long (2010: 90-93) explains that "[n]ot unlike the *jīva* of Jainism, which is pure bliss, perception, consciousness, and power, Brahman is described as infinite being, consciousness, and bliss (*sat-chit-ānanda*)" (p. 92). Perhaps Nayacandra is not just adopting this view, but subtly playing with the resemblances and differences. Somewhat curiously, perhaps, Nayacandra leaves out one traditional attribute, namely that of *sat* "being, real, existent". This is the quality of brahman which generally - in the Upaniṣads, as in later philosophical treatises of various Hindu traditions - precedes *cit* and *ānanda*. We are thus expected to find sat as heading the compound *sat-cit-ānanda*, "existence- consciousness-bliss", the traditional make-up and nature of ultimate reality. Instead we get the adverb *sadā*, "always, perpetually" which despite being semantically clearly different from *sat*, "real", may sound as a distortion of the expected word. Is Nayacandra starting his poem with a playful twist? Is he denying "reality, existence" to a mainstream idea about the natural make-up of reality, as if to already give a glimpse of his recurrent concern with playfully challenging his readers' pre-conceptions, expectations and traditional knowledge? Or perhaps rather, by leaving out the quality of *sat* (real, existing) in a verse 'about' ultimate reality, Nayacandra may be anticipating his concluding 'point' in the seventh verse about the extraordinary reality of poetry as means to achieve true success or completion (*nālika-saṃpad*) or true play (*nālika-līlā*), as the commentary states. Nayacandra seems to purposefully start his poem by raising or playing with a major concern in the South Asian intellectual tradition, namely the opposition between (and problem of) what is ultimately, or absolutely real – denoted by the concept of *brahman* - and what is only real in appearance, the phenomenological world which in mainstream Hindu thought is said to be *māyā*, an illusion (<ludus, in play), fabricated through the divine play (*līlā*) of the gods.

individual Self (*ātman*) to the concept of *brahman,* the ultimate reality of things, the primordial substance of everything contained in the universe, including the self. In Upaniṣadic terms the ultimate spiritual goal consists in realizing that "you are *that*" (*tat tvam asi*). Nayacandra deliberately and playfully picks up on this topic in the next verse:

> The wise, who fix their attention
> on understanding the knowledge of *that*
> say that its essence is the supreme *brahman.*
> Let the navel-born (Brahmā/Ṛṣabha) make hurry to bring you liberation (Śiva):
> that man who dwells in a lotus
> *the one with lotus feet*
> and created the end of his own worldly existence
> *and who created a prosperous dwelling place.*[26]

The verse somewhat humorously urges the Hindu creator god Brahmā (who was born from Viṣṇu's *nābhi* navel) and the first Jain ford-maker Ṛṣabha (whose father was named Nābhi) to 'hurry up' (*tvar*) in order to help the people – *you (vas*) - attain liberation (*śivāya*). But there's a sting to the message. From a Jain perspective there is no creator god. Both Brahmā, and the Jain ford-makers do not concern themselves with the world, which the verse jokingly makes explicit by having them hurry up. Moreover, taking the verse as speaking about Brahmā we read that he "created the end of his own existence" (*klṛpta-bhavâvasānaḥ*). The commentary makes explicit the common 'ridicule' that Brahmā is not worshipped any longer on earth; he has no devotees. (And he is typically blamed as the cruel Creator god or Fate (*vidhi*), who *apparently* without any reason creates suffering for the people – a major theme throughout HMK).[27] This verse and the next five benediction verses can be said to serve a 'literary purpose' only, to anticipate Nayacandra's point in the seventh verse about the extraordinary quality or reality of poetry, which deserves our real attention.

But let us first return to the first verse, which already anticipates his view on what poetry does. Unfortunately, the self – conscious and blissful in its pure state - has the natural tendency to get afflicted and obscured by defilements and delusions of various sorts. We will see how the heroes in HMK repeatedly fall victim to various kinds of 'darkness' (*viśuddhi-kṛt* "what cuts purity"), not only by external enemy forces, but especially by obscuring forces within - like greed, excessive anger, pride, lust, etc. This is often explicitly linked to a self-destructive and self-deluding heroic masculinity (*vīrya,*

[26] taj-jñāna-vijñāna-kṛtâvadhānāḥ santaḥ para-brahma-mayaṃ yam āhuḥ
padmâśrayaḥ klṛpta-bhavâvasānaḥ sa nābhi-bhūr vas tvaratāṃ śivāya ||2||

[27] I discuss this at length in chapter three and four.

puṃstva), which makes the warrior-king 'sleepy'. When such forces take over, and take on excessive proportions, these 'internal enemies' – as they are often called - have a darkening, blinding effect on the self, or on the all-important feminine principle that energizes it: Śrī. Nayacandra introduces this principle positively as that "auspicious Splendor" (*śiva-śrī*) or the "Splendor of the Auspicious One", the god Śiva or any auspicious being worthy of Śrī's attention.[28]

Put most simply (and positively), the notion of Śrī represents the bright side of reality. Śrī represents a universal Splendor or Brilliance, giving off light and radiance, and thus conferring 'shine' and beauty to entities of all sorts. Importantly, this beautiful and beautifying Splendor is a feminine principle, which is naturally active, potent and playful. It is the 'energy' that makes people shine, especially the noble kings from great, successful dynasties. The whole universe is thus pervaded by Śrī, who confers her splendor to entities like the moon and sun, plants and animals, everything that shines and 'blooms' at day and at night. Entities take a "share" of this Splendor, which axiomatically constitutes one principle. But they also distribute it again, by reflecting or radiating it back to others.[29] As Lakṣmī, the goddess of Fortune, Śrī embodies the energizing power (*śakti*) of her divine husband Viṣṇu, the preserver of the universe; as Pārvatī or Umā she embodies the female aspect of Śiva; and as Sarasvatī she represents the all-important creative consort of the creator god Brahmā.

It is in her personification as Lakṣmī, that the – occasionally blinding - brilliance of Śrī comes to symbolize the unstable nature of power, the king's notoriously unfaithful or fickle wife Royal Fortune (*rājya-śrī* or *rājya-lakṣmī*). Important to recall is that HMK is a poem about the downfall of the Chauhan dynasty with the death of its last 'glorious' ruler Hammīra. Put differently, in symbolic terms HMK is a poem about *Royal Fortune's complete disappearance* from the Chauhan side.

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[28] We can take *śiva* as an adjective, qualifying *śrī* Splendor, or we can take the whole as a *tatpuruṣa* compound. Like for example in Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava*, 2.58, where Śiva is referred to as the "supreme light" (*paraṃ-jyotis*), and to which Nayacandra's opening may be purposefully alluding. The commentary of HMK glosses Nayacandra's compound *śiva-śrī* as *mokṣa-lakṣmī*, the "Fortune of liberation".

[29] See for example Shulman's discussion (2014: 44-45) of Śrī in *Raghuvaṃśa,* and Hiltebeitel 1990: 143-192, on Śrī in the *Mahābhārata*. That virtuous people may earn a 'share' of the notoriously fickle Śrī is often expressed by the root *bhaj*, to divide, 'allot a portion', as for example in *Pañcatantra,* book III, v. 103, saying that only a wise man gets a share of fortune and fame (*lakṣmyā yaśasāṃ ca bhājanam,* Hertel 1908: 193). This logic also works the other way around. For example, in one verse in HMK we learn that:

> tyāgāya bhogāya **viveka-bhājā** janena śaśvad vidhṛtā karābje |
> lebhe 'vakāśaṃ **capalā 'pi lakṣmīḥ** palāyanaṃ karttum aho na yatra || 11.29

"In order to distribute and enjoy her (i.e. Fortune/wealth), a man who possesses (the lot of) right discernment, always keeps her asunder in his lotushand. Oh! But there [in Ranthambhor] this Lakṣmī, despite her fickleness, doesn't take the opportunity to escape."

I want to emphasize that it is not a coincidence that the poem starts by evoking the principle of Śrī. This beautiful and beautifying Splendor is thematically, religious-philosophically and meta-poetically speaking at the heart of the whole poem. The point of importance is that Śrī doesn't just passively dwell in the self, but – like a female goose in a pond or stream – has the potency to enjoy herself, have fun, make love, again and again: she *plays and plays*. I chose to translate the crucial final word of the verse *raṃramīti,* as "plays and plays" to keep open the multi-semantic significance of the verbal root *ram* and represent the ear-catching intensive mode (which is poetically reinforced by the preceding two syllables of 'water' *vā-riṇi raṃramīti*). Most generally the verb *ram* means "to enjoy one's self, take delight in something". However, depending on the context, it may take on sexual, martial, spiritual and aesthetic connotations. It may thus mean "to have fun, make love, dally, play" but it also has a more 'religious' or less active peaceful connotation "to be (joyfully) at rest, be quiet or still, desist from action."

It is the comparison in this verse between Śrī and the female goose (*haṃsī*) that turns the whole verse into a meta-poetic statement. This aquatic bird, which is white in color, not only represents the pure and migratory nature of the self, but also the all-important cognitive faculty of right discrimination (*viveka*). Importantly, this female goose may represent Sarasvatī herself as her supporting vehicle (*vāhana*). Ideally, both the brilliant Śrī and the white Sarasvatī can enjoy themselves, in the purifying waters of poetry, and in the light of the self.

I believe Nayacandra's opening verse already purposefully introduces the shining energy of Śrī positively (!) as a *playing, purifying and discriminating principle*, anticipating the thematic and meta-poetic importance of this triad throughout the poem. The opening verse may already tell us that the fascinating principle of Śrī, in her shining, active, playful, migratory and discriminatory activity, may not really deserve the typical blame of being fickle (*capala*) or fleeting (*kṣaṇa-bhaṅgura*, "breaking instantly"). She may be something fragile indeed, but she is especially something valuable, something difficult to attain or maintain, *but worthy of attention*. Śrī, in her various manifestations as Lakṣmī, Pārvatī, Sarasvatī, etc., may want her many different partners – like kings and poets - to 'play along'. But she may 'fly off' and find fortune elsewhere when she suffers from a lack of sustained attention. Despite Śrī's tragic propensity to wane, this all-important and all-pervasive principle likes to shine and play, *always,* somewhere and with someone. Only when we pay close attention to this inner, playful, shining and potent principle within the self – when we sit near to it (*upāsmahe*) in an Upaniṣadic fashion – it may exert a purifying and discriminating power (*viveka*) and dispel the darkness of delusions and moral defilements.

Apart from the intertwining of meta-poetic, thematic, and religious-philosophical levels, Nayacandra's opening verse also purposefully alludes to the opening verses of other authors. There's a clear nod to Daṇḍin's famous theoretical treatise on poetry, the *Kāvyadarśa* ("Mirror of Poetry", ca. 7th-8th century) and to the *Kumārapālabhūpālacarita*

("The deeds of king Kumārapāla", 1365), composed by Nayacandra's own guru Jayasiṃha Sūri, to which I return later in this chapter.[30] We may also be able to hear an intertextual nod to the opening verse of the historical play *Hammīramadamardana* ("Crushing the intoxication of the Commander (*hammīra*)", ca. 1227-30) by another, earlier Jain poet also called Jayasiṃha Sūri[31] And finally, I think Nayacandra's semantic choices and the careful placement of the words also make audible a nod to a crucial, turning-point verse from Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava* ("Birth of the Prince", 4th century) where Śiva desisted from his yogic pose (*upā-rarāma*) when he saw the supreme light in himself, signaling the upcoming sexual union with Umā.[32]In short, it looks like Nayacandra did his best to create a monumental opening for his great poem. His opening verse is clearly not only about evoking the religious ideal of purifying the self, the ideal of 'liberation' (*mokṣa*), affecting

[30] I thank Yigal Bronner for directing my attention to this point about Daṇḍin's opening verse, where the same imagery of the goose with the verb *ram* is used. Thus (Sanskrit quoted from ed. of Belvalkar 1924)

> catur-mukha-mukhâmbhoja-vana-haṃsa-vadhūr mama |
> mānase ramatāṃ dīrghaṃ sarva-śuklā sarasvatī ||1||
>
> Dwelling with her female goose in the thicket of Brahmā's four lotus faces,
> may this all-white Sarasvatī, for a long time, have fun in my mind – the Mānasa lake.

The poem of his guru's historical poem, about Kumārapāla also reaches back to Daṇḍin. Thus, the opening verse of his is as follows (- from the edition by Ksantivijaya Gani 1926).

> cid-ānandâika-kandāya namas tasmai parātmane |
> śiva-śrī ramate yasmin haṃsîva sarasī-ruhe || 1||
>
> I bow to the supreme self, the only root of awareness and joy.
> The Splendor of fortune takes delight there, like a female goose in the lotus flower.

The imagery and words of Nayacandra's opening verse are almost the same, but his verse is arguably much more complex in terms of the greater ambiguity, wider intertextual resonances, poetic 'intensity' and overall playfulness. I elaborate on this point later in this chapter.

[31] The verse is translated and discussed by A.K Warder (2004: 519, §6717) who observes that it may well contain the gist of the play. This verse similarly starts with a meta-poetic verse about spreading the Light (*jyotir*) belonging to Sarasvatī (*sārasvatam*) to dispel the darkness of delusion (*moha-tamo-hati*). Interestingly the verse stresses that in this light (*yasmin,* similarly put at the beginning of the second line) – which is said to play like the flames of a torch - the waves of glorious deeds arising from marvelous heroes "become worthless" (*tṛṇa-lavāyante*), or literally "pieces of straw." I hope to show that Nayacandra's prologue – and the whole poem - may well be conveying the same message, using similar imagery.

[32] Namely v. 3.58 in edition of Kale 1981. Nayacandra's Upaniṣadic ***paraṃ jyotir upā****smahe* may sound as an echo of Kālidāsa's"***paraṃ jyotir upā****rarāma* in the last pāda. It may not be a coincidence that Nayacandra's verse about *śiva-śrī* (the Splendor of Śiva) similarly ends with a reduplicating verbal form of the multivalent root *ram.* For a beautiful discussion of this verse, see Handelman and Shulman 1997: 167-8.

a mood of quietism (*śānta*).[33] Nayacandra's opening verse as it were skillfully extolls the poet's own enjoyment in making audible Sarasvatī's inexhaustible stream of poetry, in all its beauty (*śrī*), depth and complexity.[34]

1.3 Sarasvatī's true play

In this section I want to demonstrate that the opening verse about the self, *in which* the shining Śrī enjoys herself or plays like the discriminating female goose (*haṃsī*), anticipates the point of the seventh verse about Sarasvatī, the sacred Vedic river and pool of poetry, *in which* aquatic birds and poets shine and play (*lasat*). The first and seventh verse seem to make a pair, separated from each other by five verses which simultaneously address the Jain ford-makers and the main Hindu deities. Moreover, this pair can be said to purposefully enclose *and* playfully undermine the 'truth value' of the verses in between. Verses two to six ostensibly praise the Hindu and Jain 'deities' for their extraordinary illuminating powers to dispel darkness, thus continuing the line of thought from the first verse. However, Nayacandra subtly distances himself from these evocations by putting them in the 'may you' (*vas*) perspective, whereas the first and seventh verse are treated from a 'let us' (*nas*) point of view.

This meta-poetic sandwiching in the opening benediction (verse 1-7) can be said to mirror or anticipate the somewhat deceitful framing of the poem as a whole, which is similarly sandwiched between two statements about Hammīra's exemplary greatness and luminous 'goodness' (*sattva*), put in the mouth of what *others* say (1.9-14.1), reaching the

[33] This religious interpretation is what the Jain commentary emphasizes, explicitly remarking that HMK's opening verse conveys the aesthetic flavor of quietism (*śānta*), which is the "seed" (*bījam*) of the cessation of desire or "thirsting" (*rasaś câtra śāntas tṛṣṇā-kṣayaṃ bījam*)

[34] Poetically speaking the non-semantic features almost make audible what it semantically says. The verse starts with a powerful 'pulse' or beat through the repetition of *da*-sounds in the first foot (*sa**dā**-ci**d**-**ā**nan**da**-mahô**da**yaîka*), which continues harmoniously but more softly in the second line with the succession of sibilant sounds (*ya**sm**in **śi**va-**śr**īḥ **sa**ra**sî**va haṃ**sī***), perhaps making audible Sarasvatī's gushing flow. When reaching the next five syllables *viśuddhi-kṛd-vā* we may hear a brief rupture in the flow, which expresses well what is meant by the double-entendre of the compound *viśuddhi-kṛd-vāriṇi*, which means "in the purifying water" (*viśuddhi-kṛd-vāriṇi*) but also – and less obviously - "warding off" (*vāriṇi*) "that which cuts the pure (self)"(*viśuddhi-kṛd*) (namely the dirt that attaches to the self, according to the commentator). After the slight audible 'cut' in the flow of the verse, the verse literally comes to rest in the smooth repetitive sounds of the verb *ram*. There is typically a small pause in the 21-syllable *indravajrā* meter after the fifth syllable of a foot, which seems to purposefully split the word 'water' *vāriṇi* in two, so that the last two syllables *riṇi* smoothly flow into the reduplicative form of ram (*vā-**riṇi raṃramīti***) and reinforce its sound and meaning.

poet's ears. Nayacandra's benedictive verses can be said to already subtly anticipate this distancing technique on a micro-level.

Before moving on to the intriguing 'concluding' verse 7 about Sarasvatī's all-pervading purifying flow, I want to briefly address the recurrent point in the five preceding verses. I already mentioned that the second verse pokes fun at Brahmā, the creator god, who effected the end of his own existence on earth. Nayacandra's verse humorously urges him to 'make hurry' (*tvaratām*) to help *you* (vas*)* attain 'liberation' (*śiva*). The point implicit in this verse is that Brahmā, like his Jain counterpart, the first ford-maker Ṛṣabha, is *not really worth evoking* as a divine principle to help us attain fortune. And this may well apply to the male 'deities' evoked in the next verses.

The over-arching point in these verses seems to again revolve around the shining (and playful) principle of Śrī – repeated several times - bestowing male 'deities' the power to dispel darkness/ignorance and awaken the people: the Hindu trinity Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, and the Sun and Moon, corresponding respectively to the most popular Jain saints Ṛṣabha, Pārśvanātha, Mahāvīra, Śāntinātha, and Neminātha. Importantly, the principle of Śrī therefore already seems to acquire her hall-mark propensity to shift partners or split herself up.

Let me briefly illustrate these points. Thus, the third verse addresses Viṣṇu/Pārśvanātha, as the supreme being who has Śrī at their side (*śrī-pārśvaḥ*). They both bear the mark of *śrī-vatsa* "favorite of Śrī" on their chest and are praised because of the greatness of their widespread fame and compassion. They are evoked to spread forth great Splendor (*śriyaṃ atanvīm*). The fourth verse addresses Śiva/Mahāvīra, who, followed by his female consort Śivā/Good Fortune (*śivānuyāto*) is endowed with playful/flashing power (*vilasad-vibhūtiḥ*). They are famous for taking away the pride of Kāma (*darpaka-darpa-hārī*). Moreover, with their white/radiant appearance (*śubhra-sthitir*) they are also credited, respectively, with destroying the "movement" of the blind demon Andhaka (*andhaka-ara*) and destroying (mental) darkness or ignorance (*andha-kāra*, "blind-maker"). The fifth verse addresses the splendid Śāntinātha or peaceful Sun (*bhāsvān saśāntiḥ*), who are credited with the power to spread right knowledge/awakening (*samyak-prabodha-prathana-prabhūṣṇur*). They are evoked to appease the wicked (*śamayatv aghāni*). They indeed both produce a waking up, the Sun literally from sleep, and Śāntinātha a metaphorical awaking from ignorance. Finally, the 'last' verse is about the Moon/Neminātha. Endowed with great light (*mahā-mahā*), he has eclipsed or destroyed the mass of darkness/ignorance (*dhvasta-tamas-samūhaḥ*). They are evoked to remain there for the sake of Splendor (*śriye stāt*).

Thematically speaking these verses can be said to introduce the poem's central guiding motif, namely that reality appears to express itself into a perpetual oscillation between 'light' and 'dark' principles, forces, modes or states: seeing and blindness, wisdom and ignorance, purification and pollution, waking and sleeping, fortune and misfortune,

remembering and forgetting, etc.[35] This natural but somewhat mysterious interplay is effected through the supposedly dark force called Time, *kāla,* which is not yet explicitly introduced here. But it will play an important role as the invisible, all-pervasive force that manages to trick people into ignorance and sleepiness, when wakefulness is most needed, as explained in chapter three.

The point worth emphasizing here is that these verses are not really meant to praise the Hindu gods and Jain ford-makers as divine principles worth evoking or worshipping to attain liberation (*śiva*) or brilliant fortune (*śrī*) – the recurrent point in these verses. I suggest that there's a purposeful switch in tone, or at least in perspective, between these verses and the enclosing first and seventh verse. Moreover, through the poetic embrace of *śleṣa,* both the Hindu deities and Jain ford-makers are subjected to the atheistic metaphysical position of the Jain tradition. Nayacandra might be playing upon the fact that in both traditions they are nevertheless popular objects of devotion and praise, perhaps not unlike historical heroes like Hammīra, and others.[36] Worship (*bhakti*) should be truly reserved for the ever moving, shimmering and tranquillizing flow of Sarasvatī, the topic of the 'concluding' verse 1.7, to which I turn now. As often in Sanskrit poetry, the verse plays upon the dual meaning of Sarasvatī as the personification of poetry and the sacred river from Vedic literature.

lasat-kavi-stoma-kṛtôru-bhaktir nālīka-sampat-subhagaṃ-bhaviṣṇuḥ |
sva-darśanena tri-jagat-punānā sarasvatī no nayatāt prasattim ||7||

- Sarasvatī as Poetic Speech-

With her widespread worship (*bhakti*)
accomplished by the praises of playful poets
she becomes beautiful
through a correspondence (*sampad*) that is true.
By showing herself
she purifies the triple world:
let Sarasvatī lead us
to tranquility.

- Sarasvatī as sacred river -

[35] This oscillation aligns with natural phenomena, like the rising and setting of the sun, the waxing and waning of the moon, the water in streams and lotus-ponds, fated to dry up in the hot season, and be replenished with the monsoon rains. As we will see, occasionally, these 'bright' and 'dark' principles-forces-modes conflate, mix up, get inverted, as I explain in chapter three. I will suggest that throughout HMK the reader is meant to grasp the intricate relation between 'dark' Time (*kāla*) and 'brilliant' Fortune (*śrī*).

[36] In his play *Rambhāmañjarī*, 1.6, Nayacandra also makes fun of the traditional gods when evoking them, saying that they only deceive us: only Kāmadeva rules this world.

With her wide streaks (*bhakti*)
created by the flocks of frolicking water birds
she becomes beautiful
through her correspondence (*sampad*) with the lotus flowers.
By showing herself
she purifies the triple world:
let Sarasvatī lead us
to tranquility.

I think the beauty and difficulty of this verse lies in filling in what is meant by the *sampad* or 'correspondence' between Sarasvatī as the sacred river and poetic speech, by the 'playful' or shining poet (*lasat-kavi*) and the frolicking or shining 'water-bird' (*lasat-kavi*).[37] The multivalent word *sampad* literally denotes the 'falling together' and indicates the fulfillment or perfect result or realization of a preceding process.[38] Again, like the imagery of the first verse, this word has clear Upaniṣadic connotations. It is used, among other things, to denote the ultimate completion of one's past actions, the ultimate "destiny" (*gati*) of things, which eventually takes place when one realizes the *sampad* or "correspondence" between the self (*ātman*) and ultimate reality (*brahman*.)[39] Again, Nayacandra deliberately bends his employment of Upaniṣadic vocabulary to meet his own poetic ends. We are invited to explore what exactly 'falls together' in this verse.

The idea, or image conjured, is somewhat paradoxical and confusing, and this might be the point. This is also reflected in the commentary. Unfortunately, the commentator thus skips over the term *sampad,* or rather, replaces it by the word *līlā* "play". We may wonder whether the commentator had a manuscript with this variant, or whether he tries to cover up his own struggle with the first line of the verse. In any case, the choice

[37] In the verse I chose to translate *lasat* here as "playful" and "frolicking", instead of something like "shining" or "brilliant", another common meaning of the word. The root *las,* with or without the intensifying prefix *vi*, is on the one hand used to express the shining appearance of things and people, a "shining forth", and on the other hand refers to playful *movement*. It is worth reflecting on the shared semantic space. The root *las* denotes a glittering, flickering, or flashing, namely a movement of light, which strikes the observer as 'play', which is why we speak of the play of waves or light, as observed, for example, in the glittering appearance of water. Things that are *lasat* or *vi-lasat* are flashing, active, playing, like the *vibhūti* of Śiva, his "power" or the sacred white ash on his body, described in verse 1.4 as v*ilasat.* The sense of playfulness is especially foregrounded in this verbal root's derivative noun *vilāsa,* which denotes the playful gestures of women, their coquetry, but also more generally comprises the playful activity of kings. We will soon encounter *vilāsa* in this sense, in 1.9, as an essential attribute of kingship's brilliance (*rājya-śrī*).

[38] I'm indebted to the detailed discussion of *sampad* in Bodewitz 2003, who explains its wide range of meanings, tracing its used from Vedic literature to texts like Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra.*

[39] Bodewitz 2003: 255. See also Shulman 2012: 127-129, who connects it to the process of poetic imagination, a "linkage wrought by and in the mind" (p. 129).

for *līlā* is significant, because it fits well with the general image of Sarasvatī who becomes beautiful through activity that is playful. Moreover, the concept of *līlā,* with its connotation of creative 'divine play' in Hindu thought, also suits well the general religious-philosophical and meta-poetic atmosphere of the prologue. Furthermore, the sound of *līlā* rings well with the preceding *nālīka*. Taken together, the commentator thus explains how Sarasvatī, the river, becomes beautiful through the *līlā,* the play or 'graceful movements' of the lotus flowers (*nālīka-līlā*).[40] As Poetry embodied, she becomes beautiful by *līlā* or play that is genuine, not false (*na-ālīka-līlā*).

The verse itself, however, has *sampad,* and not *līlā.*[41] Let me therefore try to take seriously the notion of *sampad* "falling together", which may be likewise indicative of the transformative power inherent to the concept of play (*līlā*). Importantly, the notion of *sampad* indicates the successful completion or fulfilment of a preceding process.[42] We may take this verse to literally express the perfect culmination of an auditive and cognitive process which took off in the first verse. All the poetic imagery of the preceding verses seems to purposefully come together in this verse. The cumulative process, involving the many manifestations of Śrī's energizing Splendor, reaches its peak in the first line of this verse. This process, Poetry's *becoming beautiful,* literally comes to rest in the last line, suggesting that it is the *bhakti* "worship" of Sarasvatī - and not of the preceding male 'deities' – which truly leads *us* to tranquility (*no nayatāt prasattim*). The syntax, imagery and semantic choices in this verse purposefully mimic that of the preceding verses, but they all come out stronger and more truthful.[43]

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[40] If Sarasvatī, as river, becomes beautiful through the play of the lotuses (*nālika-līlā*) we can understand the play of the lotuses, their *līlā,* in the word's original sense as a slow, gracious back-and-forth movement. After all, the poet invites us to see the connection between the beauty or play (*līlā*) of the lotuses and the image preceding it. The lotuses must be moving because of the movement of the water, created by the wide streaks (*uru-bhakti*) of the frolicking water-birds (*lasat-ka-vi*). Or perhaps rather, the lotuses appear to play in the sense of imitating (another common meaning of *līlā*) the frolicking movements of the water birds.

[41] The manuscripts I know of do not have the *līlā* variant. We can assume with certainty that Nayacandra had used the word *sampad.* In the prologue of his guru Jayasiṃha Sūri's *Kumārapālabhūpālacarita*, on which his own prologue is modeled, thus also has this conspicuous word, in verse 1.12 "*preritas tad-guṇa-grāma-rāmaṇīyaka-sampadā*" ("I was impelled by the pleasurable 'perfection' of the assemblage of his virtues.") I explain the influence of this poem on Nayacandra's work in the next section.

[42] Bodewitz (2003: 257) explains that *sampad* in its most general sense means "(full) growth, successful close of an activity, (perfect or successful) the conclusion of a process or activity, culmination of a development, ultimate result/effect/gain/success, outcome, final product."

[43] Thus, the last pāda "let Sarasvatī lead *us* to tranquility" (*sarasvatī **no** nayatāt prasattim*) purposefully resonates with the last pādas from the preceding verse, where we for example hear (1.2) "let Brahmā/Ṛṣabha hurry up to make *you* reach liberation" (*sa nābhibhūr **vas** tvaratāṃ śivāya*) and (1.3) "let Viṣṇu/Śrī-Pārśvaḥ spread out his great Splendor for *you* (*śrī-pārśvaḥ śriyaṃ **vas** tanutād atanvīm*). Also, whereas the Sun/Śāntinātha (1.5) becomes beautiful (*subhagaṃ-bhaviṣṇuḥ*) through a splendor that has the power to

Unlike the previous verses, which similarly exploit the correspondence between the Hindu gods and Jain 'ford-makers' (*tīrthaṅkara*), there may be something more genuine about the 'falling together' (*sam-pad*) of Sarasvatī, as river and poetry. They share something that is not false or pretended (*na-ālīka*). This impression may also be reinforced by the fact that the second line, unlike in the preceding verses, doesn't require the punning device of *śleṣa* to suggest similarity. Thanks to the work of Yigal Bronner we know that *śleṣa* is not just used for the sake of word play, it is "not an end in itself, but a poetic device subordinate to concerns of plot and characterization."[44] Although the complexity of *śleṣa* indeed reaches its peak in the first line of this difficult verse, in the second line the ambiguity smooths itself out in two simple verse feet without equivocal imagery. At last Sarasvatī shows herself - clearly (but temporarily) - as a placid stream, to bring us tranquility.

The point may be that, in the poet's vision, the shared properties of Sarasvatī's purifying and tranquillizing flow, as river and poetry, may be truly similar. To begin with, the shared purifying power depends on Sarasvatī's liquid quality, which is preserved in her name itself: she is the one who is endowed with water, (*saras-vatī*), with that which flows. Poetic speech too is said to flow and purify, bring mental clarity, and produce *rasa,* the tasty 'sap' of aesthetic experience. For example, in his epilogue Nayacandra speaks of how "the speech of wise men flows forth from or through the playful gestures of Sarasvatī" (*vāṇī vāṇī-vilāsāt prasarati viduṣāṃ* 14.40). The similarity between the river flow and poetic flow not only depends on its liquidity, but also on the way they flow, and why they are or *become* beautiful. This may be the all-important point in these verses. Rivers don't flow in a straight line, they meander, flow in bends, just like poetic speech is distinguished from everyday speech because it is *vakra,* "bended, curved, twisted". Poetic speech is crooked, playful speech (*vakrokti*), which deliberately avoids straightforward explicitness. It thrives on playful ambiguity, paradox, ironies and ambivalences, making the familiar unfamiliar through ways of indirection, disguising meaning. All this ambiguity and the creative manipulation of language potentially evoke a deeper understanding of reality than would be possible through ordinary, direct speech.[45]

Taken together, as one cumulative process, these seven verses thus make an intriguing meta-poetic statement.[46] To put it most simply, the concluding verse implicitly but

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spread forth the right awakening (*samyak-prabodhana-prathana-prabhūṣṇur*), Sarasvatī becomes beautiful through a 'correspondence' (*sampad*) that is true (*nālīka-sampat-subhabaṃ-bhaviṣṇuḥ*).

[44] Bronner 2010: 102.

[45] This idea is very much inspired by the conclusion to the section 'the disguise of language' in Bronner's study of *śleṣa* (2010: 88-9).

[46] Cf. also Ingalls (1968: 34) about the "cumulative flow" of the opening verses of *Kumārasambhava*: "Each verse furnishes a separate and complete thought, employs distinct images and usually a distinct figure

powerfully suggests that it is poetry's beauty that truly awakens us - or awakens us to the beauty and complexity of reality. Unlike the space occupied by the Hindu and Jain 'deities' who don't intervene in the ordinary world – from a Jain perspective - poetic speech truly pervades the triple world (*tri-jagat*), that is, the whole universe.[47] It is Poetry's playful flow that may provide the 'real' *tīrtha* or fording place to purify the self.[48]

The message implicit in the seven opening verses might be something like this. May *you or they* evoke the Hindu gods and Jain 'ford-makers' to bring about the Splendor of liberation (*śiva-śrī*). But let us (rather) 'sit near' (*upāsmahe*) or attentively listen to the playful mechanisms of Sarasvatī. What she accomplishes or fulfills (*sampad*) through her play (*līlā*) is true, genuine, not false. Poetry of course also operates through tricks and deceit (*chala*).[49] The words of poets may even trick the clever (*chekila*) as Nayacandra puts it in the prologue of his play *Rambhāmañjarī*.[50] But at least the experience of poetry's flow, with its whirls and bends, may truly activate the all-important principle of Śrī, which may be lying dormant in our selves. The verse implies that Poetic Speech alone or *truly* enables the kind of transformation associated with the waking powers of Śiva, the Sun, etc. because it calls for a special kind of attention and engagement.

There is probably much more that this Sarasvatī verse evokes through the multivalent concept of *sampad*. For example, the verse may be playing with the paradoxical idea of *bhakti,* which, in the words of Shulman, is the kind of love which is experienced as a mode of separation (*viraha*), a tragic but beautiful "separation-in-union" with a divinity.[51] In this verse too Sarasvatī's *becoming* beautiful or loved (*subhagam*) is presented in similar, paradoxical imagery, through the poetic device of *śleṣa.* Thus, while moving through Sarasvatī's waters, the 'frolicking water-birds' (*lasat-kavi*) – or the poets - create ripples in

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of speech from its neighbors. And yet there is a cumulative flow to these verses, in effect not unlike the opening of a symphony."

[47] David Kinsley (1988: 192) in discussing the significance of the sacred river in Indian culture – the Ganges and her earlier Vedic equivalent Sarasvatī – observes how she represents a "liquid axis mundi, a pathway connecting all spheres of reality, a presence at which or in which one may cross over to another sphere of the cosmos, ascend to heavenly worlds, or transcend human limitations." Poets and theoreticians of poetry typically award Sarasvatī with this transporting and transformative power, which they call extraordinary (*a-laukika*), and superior to the experience of ordinary reality.

[48] Bronner (2010: 154) has discussed a more explicit rendering of this view in Kavirāja's *Rāghavapāṇḍavīya,* where the poet speaks of his endeavour as a "sacred pool of poetry that removes all stains", in which the wise should "plunge with joy".

[49] See also Phyllis Granoff's article (2014) on Bilhaṇa's play Karṇasundarī, where she stresses the extraordinary world of theater as "a display of illusions, tricks meant to deceive (*kapaṭa*) but at the same time, it is also poetry, which has the power to reveal to us what is ultimately true" (p. 545).

[50] The Prakrit verse 1.12 makes it humorously explicit that the words of poets, like the breasts of women, deceive the clever ones (*chaïlla*) (Poddar 1976, p. 16-17). Nayacandra's epic on Hammīra and his play on Jayacandra are clearly composed in a similar vain.

[51] Shulman 1985: 41.

her stream, and *break* its tranquil, placid surface. This is the poet's way of showing his devotion (*bhakti*) to Sarasvatī. The verse indeed suggests that Sarasvatī's waters become beautiful through these wide lines, irregularities, breaks (*uru-bhakti*, the commentary glosses it as *vi-cchitti,* "fracture", "cutting off", "separation"). Paradoxically, these ruptures in her waters ultimately generate a purifying experience of mental clarity and calmness (*prasattim*). The verse may be suggesting that in and through Sarasvatī's flow the paradoxical experience of *bhakti* can truly exist, because in poetry, images or experiences of separation and union can 'truly fall together' (*nālīka-sampad*).

1.4 Crossing the ocean, playing in the sky: intertextual games

When moving from the verse about Sarasvatī to the introduction of Hammīra in verse 1.8, we may not really experience a break. The author (temporarily) abandons the use of word puns (*śleṣa)* but the ambiguity takes on new forms. Moreover, the thematic elements of splendor (*śrī*), delusion (*moha*), playfulness, and purification continue. In other words, the cumulative effect of HMK's monumental 'benediction' goes on in the next verses. Every individual verse introduces something new, while reinforcing the imagery of what precedes. Sometimes there's a clear twist, as in the turn from 1.8 to 1.9, where we get the purposeful repetition of Hammīra's exemplary goodness or luminous courage (*sattva*), followed by the conspicuous word *kila* "as they say". This small but significant word reinforces the ambiguity of the all-important thematic question in verse 1.9 about Hammīra's relationship to Śrī, whether he values her or not. The word *kila* repeats itself in the next verse to again undermine the idea of what is literally said. We could view a somewhat ironic "as they say" as a defining characteristic of Nayacandra's poetic project as a whole. HMK clearly reads as a playful, creative engagement with tradition, both with the Sanskrit poets of old *and* with how the story of Hammīra was told in his time.

Let us start with a quick reading of verses 1.8 to 1.13, which clearly form a new unity.

> Like the great kings Māndhātṛ, Sītā's husband and Kaṅka
> how many have there not been on this earth?
> But in the age of Kali,[52] king Hammīra alone

[52] I choose to translate the variant from the (older) manuscript K, which has *kalau,* "in the kaliyuga", instead of *teṣu* "among these". The commentary also has *teṣu,* but also makes explicit that in the last line is meant *kaliyugôtpannaḥ* "risen in the *kaliyuga*". An undated and incomplete manuscript I obtained in Jodhpur also has *kalau.* The temporal framing, as I explain below, is indeed of some significance.

is worthy of praise because of the quality of goodness (*sattva*). (1.8) [53]

He lived only by virtue of his goodness, as they say (*kila*).
So when he did not give away his daughter and those refugees to the Śaka,
were his life and even the playful charms
of Royal Splendor (*rājya-śriyo*) of any value to him? (1.9)[54]

It is therefore that I want to tell just a little
about his life story, out of a desire to purify the warrior class.
I was nudged, as they say (*kila*), by the heaviness of this and that quality of him,
after they plunged deeply into the root of my ear. (1.10)[55]

How huge is this gap between the good and great deeds
of this king and this tiny intellect of mine?
I am a fool therefore, who out of extreme delusion
wishes to cross the great ocean with only one hand. (1.11)[56]

Yet, by the grace of my guru I have the power
to turn his life into a eulogy (*stavanaṃ*).
Isn't it so that the antelope, due to his affectionate bond
with the moon's lap, can gracefully play in the sky? (1.12)[57]

That king Hammīra became the gem
on the crest of the brilliant Chauhan dynasty.
I will tell, from the beginning and according to history (*aitihyato*)
about his rise, which generated joy and frivolity. (1.13)[58]

A quick reading of these verses would support the widely held idea that HMK's author is out to tell a glorious story about exemplary rulers, an unambiguous eulogy (*stavanam,* 1.12) about Hammīra, who is emphatically introduced as the only (*eka*) praiseworthy king

[53] māndhātṛ-sītā-pati-kaṅka-mukhyāḥ kṣitau kṣitîndrāḥ kati nāma nâsan |
kalau stavârhaḥ param eṣa sattva-guṇena hammīra-mahī-bhṛd ekaḥ ||1.8||
[54] sattvâika-vṛtteḥ kila yasya rājya-śriyo vilāsā api jīvitaṃ ca |
śakāya putrīṃ śaraṇāgatāṃś câprayacchataḥ kiṃ tṛṇam apy abhūvan ||1.9||
[55] ato 'sya kiñcic caritaṃ pravaktum icchāmi rājanya-pupūṣayâham |
tadīya-tat-tad-guṇa-gauraveṇa vigāhya nunnaḥ kila karṇa-jāham ||1.10||
[56] kvâitasya rājñaḥ sumahac caritraṃ kvâiṣā punar me dhiṣaṇâṇurūpā |
tato 'ti-mohād bhujayâikayâiva mugdhas titīrṣāmi mahā-samudram ||1.11||
[57] guru-prasādād yadi vâsmi śaktas tadīya-vṛtta-stavanaṃ vidhātum |
sudhā-karôtsaṅga-saraṅga-yogān mṛgo na khe khelati kiṃ sakhelam ||1.12||
[58] śrī-cāhamānânvaya-mauli-maulir babhūva hammīra-narādhipas tat |
aitihyato vacmi purā tadīyām utpattim utpādita-harṣa-helām ||1.13||

of the present, degenerate age of *kali*. He is indeed presented as the very epitome of *sattva,* that quality (*guṇa*) signifying everything that is good, pure, illustrious, bright, courageous.[59] The praise about Hammīra's greatness continues up to the point we reach the (temporary) conclusion that he was - or perhaps rather was remembered as - the greatest ruler of the illustrious (*śrī)* Chauhan dynasty (*śrī-cāhamānânvaya,* 1.13). On the surface, these verses thus continue the line of thought of the preceding benedictive verses. Like the Hindu deities and Jain ford-makers are credited with dispelling darkness and ignorance, the poet now evokes the *sattvic* Hammīra, another bright ideal whose famous story has the potential to illuminate us and bring us purification. Nayacandra indeed makes explicit that he wants to tell Hammīra's exceptional story out of a desire to purify the royal class (*rājanya-pupūṣayā,* 1.9). This class of people - we are invited to assume - is generally not so virtuous, or pure, and therefore in need of purification.

Before looking a bit closer to the intertextual make-up of these verses, it is worth noting that this eulogistic tone of course continues in the rest of the introduction. We first get a short exposition on the ancient solar origin of the Chauhan dynasty (1.14-1.25), after which we reach another (temporary) conclusion in verse 1.26.

> In this dynasty there were born many kings,
> endowed with a mass of bursting valor,
> who scared away their burden of sin
> through their pure and wonderful deeds
> when combining the three ends of man.[60]

Here we read that many Chauhan kings were so perfect and pure in harmoniously combining the three ends of man (*trivarga-saṃsarga*) – pleasure (*kāma*), power/wealth (*artha*) and religious-moral duties (*dharma*) - that they managed to 'scare away' the burden of sin (*pāpa-bhārāḥ)* that naturally accrues to the self, especially in the profession of kingship.[61] Nayacandra thus ends his introduction by presenting a hopeful flash-

[59] Although *sattva* means most generally "goodness (of conduct, being)", here it clearly derives its meaning from its position in the three quality (*triguṇas*) theory of Sāṅkhya philosophy, according to which everything and everyone is constituted of the qualities of *sattva*, *rajas* ("passion", typically associated with energy, virility) and *tamas* ("darkness", associated with delusion). Hammīra, supposedly, is the hero who mostly consists of the luminous quality of *sattva.*

[60] tasmin sphurad-vikrama-cakravālā vaṃśe babhūvur bahavo nṛpālāḥ |
trivarga-saṃsarga-pavitra-citra-caritra-vitrāsita-pāpa-bhārāḥ ||1.26||

[61] For an insightful discussion of the *puruṣārthas*, see Malamoud 1981. I will occasionally come back to the significance of the *puruṣārtha* framework – or the *trivarga,* "the group of three"- as a meaningful interpretative framework. Ultimately Nayacandra's poem of Hammīra – like many great works of literature – is not just about an individual character (historical or fictional) but about the tragedy (and comedy) of

forward to the Chauhan past: the history of this illustrious dynasty and their ideal kings will be a story of perfection. And as he explained in verse 1.13, he will tell the glorious story of Hammīra as the pinnacle of the illustrious (*śrī*) Chauhan dynasty from the very beginning (*purā*) and supposedly according to remembered history, "how it was" (*aitihyato*),[62] reassuring the reader that this will be a story about a rise (*utpatti*), which brought forth joy and frivolous fun (*utpādita-harṣa-helām*).

There is clearly something weird about this framing. How indeed, can Hammīra's story be a story of a rise (*utpatti,* or the *udaya* of the opening verse), with a generative force (*utpādita*)? The inflated heroic rhetoric might be somewhat 'see-through'. The audience knows that Hammīra's tragic story will not and cannot be a story about the rise (*utpatti*) of the Chauhan dynasty. Indeed, the extravagant, hyperbolic praise and tone of these verses contrasts sharply with what the audience knows about the fate of that other well-known tragic Chauhan ruler, Pṛthvīrāja, Hammīra's infamous predecessor who was clearly remembered at the time as an example of bad 'sleepy' kingship.[63] Put differently, in the fifteenth century, when Nayacandra composed his poem, the history of the Chauhans of Ranthambhor (Hammīra) and Ajmer (Pṛthvīrāja) was not imagined as a story of upward movement (*ut-patti, udaya, ut-pādita*) and harmony, balance and fortune (*saṃ-sarga, sam-pad*). It was a story of downfall, destruction, collapse, unbalance, separation (*vi-nāśa, vi-patti, vi-ṣama, a-pad,* etc.). I will highlight in the next chapters that these are indeed *the* structuring motifs throughout the poem, which nevertheless remain in a constant tension with the eulogistic format and rhetoric of the poem.

I want to suggest that this tension can already be felt in these opening verses. There are indeed several elements, or clues, which betray not only the hollowness of the inflated rhetoric but reveal the author's concern with questioning the ideal Hammīra is supposed to represent. Again, like in the preceding seven verses we need to read slowly and pay close attention to the words chosen and tone created. Only then it becomes possible to see through the fragile (and illusory) nature of the ideal.

First, the surface 'truth value' of these verses gets undermined by the deep intertextual make-up of the whole introduction. An audience familiar with the Sanskrit literary tradition would immediately hear how the whole prologue is modeled on what Lawrence

being human, about the difficulty or de facto impossibility of navigating harmoniously (*saṃ-sarga*), in balance, through the different spheres of human endeavor.

[62] On various uses of *aitihya*, as "history", see Rao et. al. *Textures of Time* (2001), where it is observed (p.93) that *aitihya* may be taken as "a remembered past that has features of singularity, localisation, causal sequence, and authoritative transmission."

[63] See my discussion of Pṛthvīrāja's story in chapter two (2.2 "Falling Asleep"), as well as my more contextualized discussion of this episode in chapter five (5.7 "Playing with memories") where I highlight Nayacandra's concern with mixing and inverting historical memories and narrative templates.

McCrea has called the tradition of "patron-centered court epic", Sanskrit poems where the poet's patron figures as the protagonist of the poem.[64] In this sub-genre of the Sanskrit court epic (*mahākāvya*) poets link their patron's dynasty to the mythological solar and lunar dynasties in story lines that revolve around – as the titles of the poem often suggests- their rise (*abhyudaya*) to success, their romantic and royal adventures (*vilāsās*) or heroic victories (*vijaya*). Nayacandra's epic shares these thematic features, clearly adopting or playfully mimicking the style of the patron-centered epic, even though the subject is clearly not the poet's patron. I would argue that Nayacandra's HMK has a parodic relation to this sub-genre of *mahākāvya*, which suddenly rises in popularity in the beginning of the eleventh century, and according to McCrea extended "at least into the thirteenth".[65] This tradition, indeed, remains yet to be studied more systematically as a whole, in relation to the dramatic shifts in power with the emergence of the Delhi Sultanate, and its decline in the fifteenth century when we see a new resurgence of patron-centered historical poetry.

The point I want to emphasize here is that Nayacandra was well familiar with this tradition, of which Bāṇa's seventh-century *Harṣacarita* and Bilhaṇa's eleventh-century *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* constitute the best-known, influential and most-studied examples. Moreover, in the year 1365, Nayacandra himself, as a young disciple (*muni*), had made the first copy of the historical poem *Kumārapālabhūpālacarita* about the Jain Chaulukya king Kumārapāla (r. 1143 – 1172 CE), composed by his guru Jayasiṃha Sūri.[66] This poem could be placed more generally in a growing narrative, poetic, and devotional tradition surrounding king Kumārapāla and the later minister-patron Vastupāla at the early thirteenth-century Chaulukya-Vaghela court in modern Gujarat. Curiously, nearly all of the first twenty verses of Nayacandra's poem on the Chauhans allude to this poem about the Chaulukya king. But the tone is strikingly different.

For example, his guru Jayasiṃha Sūri thus introduces Kumārapāla as the foremost among kings, *according to fact* (*vastu-tas,* 1.11), because of his glory which was like the moon among the stars. In Nayacandra's poem, by contrast, the introduction of the subject is followed by a verse which qualifies the attributed quality of goodness (*sattva*) with a particle of doubt: *kila, "*so it is said*"*. I return to this point soon. Jayasiṃha Sūri's speaks about how he wants to tell Kumārapāla's life story "out of a desire to purify oneself" (*sva-pupūṣayā,* 1.12), whereas Nayacandra wants *to purify the warrior class* (*rājanya-purpūṣayā,* 1.9). So when Nayacandra says that by the grace of his guru (*guru-prasādād,* 1.12) he is able

[64] In McCrea 2010.

[65] McCrea 2010: 506.

[66] See the Hindi preface in the edition of Jinavijaya 1993 [1968]: 26. In the epilogue of HMK Nayacandra praises his guru (14.23), and also mentions him as the author of a poem on king Kumāra(pāla) (14.24). The text is edited by Ksantivijaya Gani 1926, from which the Sanskrit text is quoted in this chapter.

to compose a praise poem (*stavanaṃ*) about Hammīra, he is both alluding to what Jayasiṃha Sūri said himself in 1.14 , but also literally saying the truth.[67] It is indeed Nayacandra's great familiarity with this tradition of poetry, 'taught to him by his guru', that allows Nayacandra to put Hammīra's story in the frame work of a eulogistic biography.[68] But it looks almost like a parody. Even though Nayacandra frames Hammīra's story by adopting *almost* the same turns of phrases from the biography of Kumārapāla - and makes the praises come out even more splendid – his verses do not express the message itself with the 'certainty' from the adopted model.

More can be said about the way Nayacandra playfully inflates the heroic rhetoric. The tradition of patron-centered epic had its own models, most importantly perhaps the work of Kālidāsa, and especially his *Raghuvaṃśa,* which was *the kāvya* classic on kingship. By adopting this model, we could say that poets put their historical heroes and their dynasty on pair with the illustrious Raghu dynasty, which brought forth heroes like Rāma. It is thus partly in accordance with the tradition of historical biography (*carita*) that in verse 1.10 and 1.11 Nayacandra alludes to two of *Raghuvaṃśa*'s introductory verses, and in 1.12 he alludes to a verse from Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava,* another important intertext as I show in the next chapter.

Importantly, Nayacandra doesn't just emulate Kālidāsa's imagery, but deliberately intensifies it, making the heroic rhetoric come out even more strongly. Thus, Kālidāsa famously proclaimed that he composed his poem on the Raghu dynasty because he was "driven to rashness on account of their qualities when they reached his ear" (*tad-guṇaiḥ karṇam āgatya cāpalāya pracoditaḥ*).[69] Nayacandra intensifies this imagery by speaking how he was impelled or nudged (*nunnaḥ*) by the *heaviness* (*gauraveṇa*) relating to *this and that* quality (*tat-tat-guṇa*), after *they plunged deeply* (*vigāhya*) into the *root* of his hear (*karṇa-jāhaṃ*). In the next verse Nayacandra similarly intensifies the imagery from yet another introductory verse from *Raghuvaṃśa*. Whereas Kālidāsa underlines the rashness of his effort by comparing himself to a fool who out of delusion wishes to cross the ocean with a raft (*mohād udupenâsmi sāgaram),*[70] Nayacandra says he's like a fool who out of *utmost* delusion (*ati-mohād*) wishes to cross the *great* ocean (*mahā-samudram*) with *only one hand* (*bhujayâikayâiva*). In the following verse, he doubles the alliterating word-play he

[67] Thus, Nayacandra's verse 1.12 almost 'plagiarizes' verse 1.14 in the poem from his guru: *guru-prasādād īśyate yadvā tad-vṛtta-varṇane | kuraṅgaḥ kiṃ vidhûtsaṅga -saṅgataḥ khe na khelati ||14||.* This extreme borrowing happens in nearly all Nayacandra's verses from the prologue. But he gives these verses a new twist, playfully and creatively.

[68] Accordingly, the origin myth of the Chauhan dynasty too is fashioned in the same style as the Chaulukya myth.

[69] *Raghuvaṃśa*, 1.9, quoted from edition of Kale 2014 (reprint).

[70] *Raghuvaṃśa* 1.2, (ibid.)

borrowed from a verse in Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava.* Whereas Kālidāsa has *khe khelati* "he plays in the sky", Nayacandra has *na **khe khelati kiṃ sa-khelam*** "doesn't he play playfully in the sky?".[71]

I want to suggest that these intertextual nods to Kālidāsa and the more general modelling on the patron-centered epic direct the attention from the poem's heroic subject to that of the form. The general effect of the introduction is intertextual. We hear a skillful poet who is playing intertextual games by 'crossing oceans' and 'playing in the sky'. Put differently, one not only hears the introduction of Hammīra and the ancient Chauhan origins, but one hears playful nods to Kālidāsa or the tradition of patron-centered poetry. It is the (proud) recognition of the intertext that draws the attention.[72] His poem is not only about Hammīra, but about poetry itself. The emulation of the rhetoric of patron-centered epic might border on being a parody. I believe this is especially evident in the prologue, epilogue, and the eighth canto (discussed in 1.4). Nayacandra deliberately exploits the incongruity between the adopted eulogistic format of the patron-centered *carita* and the tragic content of his poem. There's something odd about presenting Hammīra's story in the traditional frame of a *carita,* which is typically concerned with describing the protagonist's rise to success, his acquisition or consolidation of Fortune (*śrī*), and to present the protagonist and his royal family, in the words of Daud Ali, "as beacons of virtue in dark times".[73]

The potentially parodic effect does not depend on ridiculing earlier poets and their poetic imagery, but in exposing the mechanisms of and contradictions within the eulogistic *carita* genre itself.[74] This, however, may have been an integral part of the tradition of historical poetry itself, as for example shown in recent close readings of Bilhaṇa's seminal epic by Yigal Bronner and Lawrence McCrea.[75] They show how this work is characterized by what Bronner calls a 'poetics of ambivalence'. It is 'poetry beyond good and evil' in the words of McCrea, who explains that

> Bilhaṇa not infrequently evinces a dark and altogether cynical vision of the nature of politics and of royal power which stands in profound tension with the ostensibly panegyric orientation of his work, and of patron-centered *mahākāvya* more generally. This emerges most clearly in Bilhaṇa's

[71] *Kumārasambhava*, 7.49, in edition of Kale 1981 (reprint). Jayasiṃha Sūri's *Kumārapālabhūpālacarita* also has this allusion with the single alliteration *khe na khelati,* 1.14.

[72] I owe this view to my reading sessions with Vidwan H.V. Nagaraja Rao, who would immediately and proudly point out that "This is Bilhaṇa, this is Kālidāsa, Māgha, etc."

[73] Ali 2012: 90.

[74] This becomes clear in the eighth canto, as explained in the third section of this chapter.

[75] Bronner 2010 and McCrea 2010.

own remarks on the nature and importance of poetry, and specifically of royal panegyric—a topic to which he devotes considerable attention, in both the opening and closing sections of his poem.[76]

I will show that HMK is driven by a similar profound tension between eulogistic format and tragic content. But his 'critical' and subversive treatment of Hammīra's story will go far beyond the poetics of ambivalence discussed by Bronner and McCrea. Nayacandra's poem, indeed, is *not* a patron-centered epic. He will make it clear in his epilogue that he chose his topic *willingly*, *with pleasure* (*kāmam,* 14.26), nudged in a dream (*svapna-nunnena*) by the king himself – probably a nod to the tradition of patron-centered poetry itself.[77] This may explain why Nayacandra's poem is similarly dark in its presentation of kingship, but not really cynical in tone or mood. In the sections that follow I will show how we can sense our poet's critical stance toward the heroic subject he intends (or playfully pretends) to glorify as the most praiseworthy king of the present dark age of Kali.

1.5 Kali's dice game

Apart from the somewhat incongruous modelling on the patron-centered epic, the tragic nature of Hammīra's story can already be felt in the first two introductory verses. Nayacandra purposefully situates his exemplarity in the temporal framework of successive time eras (*yuga*) and its degenerative logic. Hammīra, supposedly, is the only king worthy of praise in the present, last and worst age: the dark *kaliyuga,* the age of Kali. He is put in line with the tragic 'ideals' from former eras: Māndhātṛ, Rāma and Yudhiṣṭhira.

There is however an underlying irony by putting Hammīra next in line to the "foremost" (*mukhyāḥ*) kings of the former eras. Thus, conspicuously, Nayacandra chose to refer to Yudhiṣṭhira - the deeply flawed hero of the *Mahābhārata* who gambled away his kingdom - as Kaṅka. This is the 'false' name he adopted when spending the last year of exile incognito, quite ironically disguised as a master of dice and advisor to king Virāṭa. By referring to the righteous king Yudhiṣṭhira under his 'disguised' gambler name Kaṅka Nayacandra seems to adopt the *Mahābhārata*'s parodic dig at itself in the much-debated Virāṭaparvan (book four), where the Pāṇḍava brothers have to undergo all kinds of humiliations. Moreover, the tragic, apocalyptic outcome of the *Mahābhārata* war is

[76] McCrea 2010: 506.

[77] I discuss this verse at length in chapter five, section 5.6 "Nayacandra's dream-vision".

generally said to be the start of the *kaliyuga*.[78] The word *kali,* often translated as 'conflict, strife', is typically presented as the demonic, dark spirit of the present age, also in HMK.[79] In the story of Nala and Damayantī - the famous sub story told in the *Mahābhārata* to Yudhiṣṭhira himself to console him and mitigate the personal tragedy of his dice game– the demonic spirit of Kali is said to have entered Nala by entering the dice.[80]

To understand the playful and tragic conception of time, it is worth noting that in the *purāṇic* framework of the four successive *yugas* each era represents the number of a throw in the dice game. The first *kṛta* "accomplished" era thus represents the winning throw, showing four dots, the *tretā* and literally "third" age is the dice with three dots, the *dvāpara* or "second" age is the dice showing two dots, and finally the age of *kali* is the losing throw, showing one dot. This diminishing, counting-down logic runs parallel with a general decline of moral order (*dharma*).[81] The present dark age of Kali is therefore imagined quite literally to roll forth from the losing throw of the deeply flawed ruler of the previous era. From this temporal perspective, Hammīra's story about the hero of the *kaliyuga*, can be said to issue forth from Yudhiṣṭhira's tragedy and dice game. And taking in account the degenerative logic of time – the former age is always better – we might suspect that Hammīra's story will be *more* tragic than that of the gambler Kaṅka/Yudhiṣṭhira, the tragic ideal of the former age.

I will highlight in the next chapters how HMK is indeed full of *Mahābhārata* parallels, including a significant reference to the fatal outcome of the dice game, making the Pāṇḍava brothers become an object of ridicule (*viḍambaṇām,* 8.104). In some sense the opening verse can be said to literally 'count down' the *yugas*. The verse ends perhaps not coincidentally with the number one (*eka*), the losing throw, the number of the *kaliyuga*. The poem will be about *hammīra-mahībhṛd ekaḥ,* "king Hammīra, the one". Might the Chauhan king be symbolic *of* the losing dice, representing Kali?[82]

Although this reading might seem far-fetched, *Mahābhārata* parallels connected to Kali's demonic force and the play imagery of dicing or gambling occur at crucial points in the chapters about Hammīra's tragedy, as we will see in chapter four. Even though no real dicing match takes place, I will suggest that Nayacandra in fact aims to retell Hammīra's story as a new kind of apocalypse, similar to that of *Mahābhārata*. We will for example

[78] The precise time is a matter of debate, whether it started before or after the *Mahābhārata* war. The *kaliyuga* is generally calculated to have started around 3102-1 BC, see Thapar 1996: 29.

[79] The etymology of *kali* is uncertain, although popular etymology links it to Time as *kāla* (black)and the 'dark' goddess Kālī, as discussed in Rocher "Concepts of Time in Classical India" (2004: 93).

[80] See Shulman 1994 for an insightful analysis of this story.

[81] Rocher 2004: 93.

[82] For example, the rhetorical question in verse 8.67, where Hammīra is praised as the 'example' (*udāharaṇam*) in the *kaliyuga*, without specifying of what quality, seems to purposefully leaves open the idea that he might be representing the *kaliyuga* itself.

learn that in the Chauhan kingdom too there is "now one blind man who gambles" (*adhunâiko 'ndhaḥ paraṃ dīvyati*, 10.28).[83] Kali too will take over the Chauhan kingdom, taking possession of Hammīra's favorite general and traitor Ratipāla "Protector of Pleasure", who will betray the mentally (and morally?) blind king and 'play' in his kingdom (*dīvyati,* 8.102). Ironically, while all this happening, the oblivious Hammīra will imagine his relationship to Ratipāla as that between Rāma and his devoted general Hanumān. We could say HMK plays with both the Rāmāyaṇa and *Mahābhārata* template, which are purposefully made to clash. Although the Rāmāyaṇa is more triumphalist than the Māhābhārata, both are deeply tragic in its own distinct ways.[84] Wendy Doniger, drawing attention to how the *Mahābhārata* cites Rāma's story as being sadder than Yudhiṣṭhira's personal tragedy, aptly observes that the "contrast between triumph and tragedy could stand as the general tone of the two great poems."[85]

Of course, Hammīra's replication of the *Mahābhārata* tragedy is not evident from the introduction. My point is that Nayacandra implicitly introduces the degenerative and playful logic of the time era's (*yuga*) by referring to Yudhiṣṭhira as (the gambler) Kaṅka and putting his own 'unique' (*eka*) story in line with the 'foremost' rulers of the former ages. Hammīra might - and will indeed - embody a new kind of tragic gambler, who will blindly stake the kingdom's fortune. I will argue that Nayacandra deliberately hollows out the idea of being called the 'one'. He makes several heroes – both protagonist and antagonist – take claim to this status, as if to expose the heroic and delusional desire to excel, to be the best (often at the cost of other pursuits). Nayacandra may be exposing this as a worn-out cliché, repeated many times in the tradition of royal panegyric, where everyone aspires to be the luminous ideal of the present age. From the (Jain) Chaulukya perspective it is Kumārapāla (or Vastupāla, the Jain minister), from the Paramara perspective, it is king Bhoja, and from the Chauhan perspective, it is Hammīra, etc. I will argue that Nayacandra confronts such claims to uniqueness by presenting Hammīra's story as a (tragi-comic) re-enactment of his deeply flawed predecessor Pṛthvīrāja.

Of course, even a near-perfect hero like Rāma has his flaws. But unlike the two flawed epic heroes of the former age, Rāma and Yudhiṣṭhira, Hammīra will not succeed in restoring the Chauhan lineage's Fortune (*śrī*/*lakṣmī*). When Hammīra, supposedly the 'only praiseworthy' hero of this age, stakes the Fortunes of his kingdom, it leads to the complete destruction of his dynasty. There will be no heir to pass on his charming symbolic wife, Royal Fortune (*rājya-śrī*), which brings us to the all-important ambiguous question of verse 1.9.

[83] I discuss this episode in chapter two.

[84] See for example Shulman's reading of the distinct historical poetics of the Sanskrit epics, included as the first essay in Shulman 2001.

[85] Doniger 2009: 303.

1.6 Lakṣmī's playful charms

If the first introductory verse about Hammīra's unsurpassed good or courageous character (*sattva*) also subtly introduces the tragic temporal logic of the *kaliyuga*, then the following verse purposefully re-introduces the related and all-important topic of Śrī. Let's recall that this beautiful and beautifying Splendor entered the poem in the very first verse as the auspicious, luminous, active and playful potency of the Self (*ātman*), where she can, ideally, enjoy herself, again and again (*raṃramīti*). Verse 1.9 too refers to her playful activity (*vilāsa*), revealing Śrī's natural connection to kingship (*rājya*). On the surface this verse introduces the reader to the heroic core of the Hammīra legend, explaining the reason why the Chauhan king was remembered as the only praiseworthy king of the present age. Importantly, however, this heroic core is formulated in the form of a rhetorical question, an ambiguous one about the *value* of Fortune/Splendor. I want to emphasize that Hammīra's exemplary status is literally questioned (in 1.9). To further add a sense of doubt, Nayacandra appears to present Hammīra's luminous "goodness" (*sattva*) from the eighth verse as a debatable point by conspicuously repeating it in the ninth verse, followed by the significant word *kila,* "as it is said". Let me, for the sake of clarity, first isolate these two verses again, before further making my point.

> Like the great kings Māndhātṛ, Sītā's husband and Kaṅka
> how many have there not been on this earth?
> But in the age of Kali, king Hammīra alone
> is worthy of praise because of the quality of goodness (*sattva*). (1.8) [86]
>
> He lived only by virtue of his goodness, as they say (*kila*).
> So when he did not give away his daughter and those refugees to the Śaka
> were his life and even the playful charms
> of Royal Splendor (*rājya-śriyo*) of any value to him? (1.9)[87]

Through the use of *kila* "as they say" Nayacandra seems to be 'quoting' the gist of the traditional story. He *reminds* the audience of the traditional core of the Hammīra legend, namely that the Chauhan king heroically refused to hand over several (Mongol) refugees and his daughter to the Śaka (Sultan Alauddin). It is through this altruistic act that – as it

[86] māndhātṛ-sītā-pati-kaṅka-mukhyāḥ kṣitau kṣitîndrāḥ kati nāma nâsan |
kalau stavârhaḥ param eṣa sattva-guṇena hammīra-mahī-bhṛd ekaḥ ||1.8||
[87] sattvâika-vṛtteḥ kila yasya rājya-śriyo vilāsā api jīvitaṃ ca |
śakāya putrīṃ śaraṇāgatāṃś câprayacchataḥ kiṃ tṛṇam apy abhūvan ||1.9||

is said (*kila*) - Hammīra acquired the status of being the epitome of goodness (*sattva*). This is also how Hammīra is presented in Vidyāpati's roughly contemporaneous story collection, his *Puruṣaparīkṣā* ("The Test of Man") and in the genealogical list appended to Rājaśekhara's *Prabandhakośa* ("Treasure of stories", 1348). The latter text adds to the date of the *last* ruler Hammīra, who was killed in battle in V.S.1358 (1301 CE), that this king was endowed with *sattva* (*prabhuḥ sattva-vān*).[88] In Nayacandra's epic too, in both the prologue and epilogue, Hammīra is similarly presented as an epitome of altruism and heroic self-sacrifice.[89] I explain at length in the last chapter how Nayacandra's *new* poem of Hammīra seeks to invert several - if not all - traditional elements of the plot, as a playful response to more overtly heroic stories of Hammīra at the time. For the argument of this chapter it might suffice to just draw attention to Nayacandra's use of the small but significant word *kila*, which, I argue, is intended to already plant a seed of doubt concerning Hammīra's supposed selfless, *sattvic* character. (This doubt will come to its full fruition in the actualization of Hammīra's story from canto nine to thirteen, discussed in chapter four).

The word *kila* is used to express something like "so we are told". It is used to specify knowledge derived from tradition, indicating what *others* have said. In this sense, writers often employ it to represent the wrong views of their opponents, before they set out to make a different point. As M.B. Emeneau explains, the particle *kila* often tends to mark a tone of sarcasm or irony by attributing traditional status to a false statement.[90] Because of the conspicuous repetition of the point about Hammīra's goodness (*sattva*), it is quite likely that we can take Nayacandra's verse to means something like this: 'so this is what the tradition tells (*kila*), *but...*'. Of course, Nayacandra doesn't state a 'but' here. This is not the place, yet, to challenge his audience and break the ideal.[91]

The point I want to emphasize here is that the word *kila* "so we are told" fits well with the interrogative sense of the verse and the intertextual make-up of the whole prologue. This might explain why it is also added, somewhat conspicuously, in the next verse, where Nayacandra explains that he was only 'allegedly impelled' (*nunnaḥ kila*) to compose his

[88] Jinavijaya 1935: appendix two, 134.

[89] In the epilogue in 14.17.

[90] Emeneau (1969: 248) discussing the different use of the syntactic particles *kila, khalu* and *nūnam.* If Nayacandra intended to express certainty or avoid ambiguity, he would have used another particle. Throughout HMK the particle *kila* is thus used to qualify 'traditional knowledge' and occasionally modify it, as is clear in v. 8.41 and 14.4. This questioning technique may not be that uncommon in the beginning of an epic. Eva De Clercq pointed out to me that Vimala Sūri's Jain version of the Rāmāyaṇa (*Paümacariyam*) also starts by questioning the Brahmanical version through the use of *kila* (Prakrit *kia*).

[91] Later in the poem, through the words of Bhoja, Nayacandra will actually insert a crucial 'but' (*param*) to break the ideal of Hammīra's kingship, and implicitly reveal that he has become mad and blind (in verses 8.28-29, discussed at length in the fourth chapter).

poem because the weight of Hammīra's virtues had plunged into the root of his ear. The use is odd in this verse because Nayacandra is speaking in the first person.[92] We would have expected an unambiguous particle like *khalu,* "indeed, certainly" – or the 'in fact' (*vastu-tas*, as used in the adopted model of Jayasiṃha Sūri's poem on Kumārapāla, noted earlier) - and not an "as they say". The choice for this word therefore appears to give a clue to the reader that his prologue is indeed modelled on 'what tradition says'. (Worthy of note is that the single surviving commentary deliberately irons out the ambiguity, which I believe is latent in this verse.)[93] But Nayacandra's poem will do something different. He is playing with tradition, both in terms of the author's persistent concern to playfully alter traditional elements of the Hammīra story, as in terms of his profound intertextual engagement with the poets of old.

Let me now finally turn to what I believe is thematically at the core of Nayacandra's poetic project. I suggest that the apparent subject of the poem – Hammīra's supposedly selfless heroism - is purposefully cloaked in an ambiguous question about the value of Royal Fortune (*rājya-śrī*), and what She symbolizes. She may represent many, seemingly contradictory things: the fickle nature of power, the inevitable transience of fortune, or her inherent fragility, the charming brilliance of kingship, the well-fare of the kingdom, etc. And did Hammīra consider Royal Fortune worthless or not? And in either case, is this a good thing, worthy of admiration or not?

In my view, the ambiguity of the question revolves around the equivocal imagery surrounding Royal Fortune as the king's symbolic wife. Similar to the fickleness and capricious nature of Lady Fortune (*fortuna*) in European literature, the notion of 'fortune' is typically personified as an unfaithful lady who randomly and recklessly moves from one husband to another. Importantly, this may have something to do with the elusive topic of Time (*kāla*) and the complex notion of fate. In his discussion of Śrī in the *Mahābhārata*, Alf Hiltebeitel explains how she is said to "move in accord with the rhythm of Time", going back and forth "irrespective of virtues."[94] "On the other hand", Hiltebeitel observes, "there is one unbroken continuity in Śrī's behavior: her movements are related

[92] I owe this point to Csaba Dezso, who remarked that *khalu* "certainly, indeed" would make more sense here.

[93] I choose to preserve the interrogative sense of *kiṃ* in my translation. Of course, as a marker of a rhetorical question *kim* is often used to make a strong affirmative statement. The commentator emphasizes that Nayacandra uses *kiṃ* in this sense, as a *niṣedhârtha*, a question evoking a negative response. Hammīra, for sure, considered the pleasures of royal fortune (*rājya-śriyo*) and his life worthless, that is 'not even the worth a straw' (*api tu tṛṇam api na babhūvuḥ*). But it remains a question, and its meaning remains ambiguous. Curiously, the commentator glosses the particle *kila* as expressing *satye*, truly, whereas a few verses later (1.14) he glosses it as *prāpta-pravāde*, "obtained from popular saying". I see no reason why Nayacandra didn't use the particle *kila* here in the same sense, with the effect of raising doubt about its truth value.

[94] Hiltebeitel 1976: 164.

to lists of royal virtues."[95] He explains how the imagery of Śrī's fickleness "coincides with a pessimistic vision of Time".[96] The pessimistic view on Fortune/Time resembles a fatalistic determinism, dictating that Fortune is fickle because - in reality - she doesn't care for virtues. Despite the view that she dwells in virtuous people of her choice, we see that virtuous people obtain misery and vice versa: in the face of fickle forces like Time and Fortune human effort (*pauruṣa*) seems often in vain.

Keeping this in mind, we can return to the question of verse 1.9. From a pejorative perspective on Lakṣmī/Fortune, the idea that Hammīra considered her worthless, might emphasize his wise nature. Hammīra might have understood the fickle nature of power. Accordingly, as a true selfless hero he considered 'her' an unworthy pursuit, not even the worth of a straw.

The point of importance is that this is just one way to look at the significance of Royal Fortune, or kingship's brilliance. I would argue that HMK repeatedly cancels out the value of the more 'pessimistic' view on Fortune's fickle nature. The author's more positive view on Śrī was already emphasized in the previous verses. Splendor (*śrī*) is the female principle needed to energize and awaken the Self. In its connection to kingship (*rājya*) this female principle is essential too. Verse 1.9 already introduces the importance of Royal Splendor by asking whether the supposedly selfless Hammīra not only considered his life worthless, but *even* (!) the pleasures of glorious kingship (*rājya-śriyo vilāsā **api***). The word *api* may be purposefully stressing the central importance of the king's symbolic wife. In symbolic terms the *vilāsās,* or "pleasures" of kingship, not only denote the playful activities a king engages in - and should engage in (but not too much, *ati*)- but refer to the playful and attractive coquetry of his symbolic wife.[97] Like lovers, a king and Royal Splendor are supposed to attract and desire each other. The well-being of his symbolic wife Fortune, just like that of the people, deserves the king's full attention.

But even from this more positive perspective on Śrī – she doesn't just randomly leave her royal husbands -, Hammīra might still emerge from the introductory question in verse nine as the epitome of selflessness. We could translate the phrase *rājya-śriyo vilāsā* as "the charming pleasures of Royal Fortune". Hammīra was so selfless that he, in order to save someone else, sacrificed both his life and *even* the many enjoyments that come with kingship, with being in power. This, for example, is the conclusion of Vidyāpati's story on Hammīra's compassionate heroism: he gave up all enjoyments for the sake of another (*parārthe*)![98]

[95] ibid.

[96] ibid. p. 165

[97] On the problem of getting *over*-attached to pleasure, see Daud Ali's article on "Anxieties of attachment" (2002).

[98] I quote and discuss this verse in the beginning of section 5.3 in the final chapter.

I will try to demonstrate that this is clearly not the message of Nayacandra's poem. I want to suggest that the *question* of verse nine already hints at the problem of poetic justice in relation to karmic justice and personal responsibility, which I discuss at length in chapter four. If Hammīra was truly good, as it is said (*kila*), why did his reign end in misfortune: maybe he *deserved* his tragic fate? Perhaps it is Royal Fortune herself who considered Hammīra worthless? After all, Hammīra might not have given away his refugees or his daughter to the enemy, but he did lose his grip on his symbolic wife Royal Fortune.

In an important sense the main duty of a king indeed consists in *maintaining* Royal Fortune, that is secure both the welfare of the kingdom and the continuation of the dynastic line. This doesn't constitute a personal goal, one involving the pursuit of selfish pleasure. It is rather imagined as the difficult but quintessential task of kingship, which is typically presented as a burden (*bhāra*), attracting 'sin' (*pāpa*), as made explicit in verse 1.26. Ironically, Lakṣmī, the goddess of Fortune, is always fated to become miserable. She is forced to undergo dangerous tests like the transfer from father to son. Importantly, as Nayacandra makes clear throughout his poem, it is not only the dynastic line, but the kingdom and everyone in it, the people, who have to suffer the consequences when a king *doesn't take care* of Royal Fortune. For example, we will see, in the pivotal eighth canto, that the court poets urge Hammīra to 'wake up' *for the good of the people* (*janatā-hitāya*, 8.124). In the same canto Hammīra is told by his father not to forget the importance of Royal Fortune:

> Oh King! When you obtain complete sovereignty,
> do not forget to behave properly towards great men.
> Like a great fire, which is not under control,
> a man causes the destruction of the entire clan (*vināśa-hetuḥ*).[99]
>
> A man who considers the affairs of honorable people
> and acts with right judgment (*viveka*), is loved by the people of this world.
> Dear son, how is it possible then that Lady Royal Fortune
> will abandon him, as she also inhabits this world?[100]

HMK's prologue already invites us to think about what it means to consider worthless *even* the playful charms of the "playful" Royal Fortune.[101] It might indeed be the charm of

[99] sāmrājyam āsādya mahattameṣu sma vismaro mā vinayaṃ nareśa |
pumān bṛhad-bhānur ivâvinītaḥ kulasya sarvasya vināśa-hetuḥ || 8.74||
[100] apy ārya-kāryāṇi vicārya kurvan vivekavān eṣa jagaj-janêṣṭaḥ |
jagan-nivāsā tad iyaṃ nṛpatva-lakṣmīḥ kathaṃ taṃ vijahāti tāta ||8.75||
[101] As she is called in 11.61: *krīḍīkṛtāṃ...rājya-lakṣmīm*

a tragic hero like Hammīra that he perceives Royal Fortune as something unworthy, making him pursue 'glory' elsewhere, for example, as we will see, by playing the game of fame (*kīrti-keli,* 10.80), or wanting to marry the Splendor of heaven (*diva-śrī,* 13.207). The question posed in verse 1.9 leaves such perspectives open. We can see it as a playful invitation to read through the poem and find out whether the *sattva* "goodness" or "conduct" of the famous Hammīra *truly* or *really* deserves to be praised as exemplary in the present age "as they say" (*kila*).[102] The ambiguity of the question opens up an alluring uncertainty. Nayacandra could have used less ambiguous imagery or words, if he wanted to, but he didn't. He invites the reader to consider the multiple sides of a popular, well-known story. And we have to explore these sides through the lens of Time's degenerative and playful logic, in relation to Śrī's brilliance (and the equivocal imagery surrounding her fickleness, transience, fragility and playfulness.) We are invited to discover whether a story about Royal Splendor's inevitable disappearance, at least on the Chauhan side, can remain without dark spots of blame.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has tried to highlight the importance of listening carefully to what lies beyond the surface meaning of Nayacandra's opening verses, which are typically neglected in modern readings of HMK. Clearly Nayacandra doesn't just introduce Hammīra as the only praiseworthy king of this age (1.8) and the pinnacle of the Chauhan dynasty (1.13). I have examined several literary strategies that complicate the surface meaning. We could understand some of the elements discussed in this chapter – the deep intertextual play, markers of doubt like *kila* or rhetorical questions, and some semantic choices like Kaṅka for Yudhiṣṭhira - as 'distancing techniques' which can be said to move the reader's attention away from the poem's surface meaning.[103] The alluring ambiguities of the prologue clearly set the tone for the rest of the poem. Put differently, beyond the

[102] The introductory section to the commentary speaks about Hammīra's *sattva* as the "seed" (*bīja*) of the poem. It is worth comparing this with the play *Satyahariścandra* of the prolific Jain writer Rāmacandra (13th century), revolving around the altruistic vow of Hariścandra, another epitome of a self-sacrificial *sattva,* see Warder 2004: §5981-5995, for a discussion of this play. The introductory verse (1.6) also introduces this hero as one who only lived by goodness, *sattva* (§5982). In comparing it with another, earlier version of Hariścandra's story, Warder notes how Rāmacandra's play presents "a lighter, cooler version, indeed a comedy, which the audience knows all along is not serious" (§ 5995).

[103] I owe the term 'distancing techniques' to a comment by Yigal Bronner on an earlier version of this chapter.

surface of a praise poem we'll hear intertextual games, subtle and striking dissonances with earlier poetic models or the 'traditional' Hammīra story, humorous incongruities, tragic questions and uncertainties, etc. Eventually these elements will invite the reader to look at Hammīra's traditional story from a different, more distant angle. At the same time Nayacandra's radically new and complex version of Hammīra's story invites or demands a novel, closer and deeper involvement with a popular story about one of the most famous historical heroes of the time.

The prologue also already introduces the major thematic axes and tensions. Of crucial thematic and meta-poetic importance is the topic of Śrī and her evoked affinity with Sarasvatī, the flow of Poetic speech and her support, the white goose (*haṃsa*), the symbol of the pure self and right discernment (*viveka*). Throughout the poem the goose is repeatedly evoked to refer to the ideal king – the soul of the pond-like kingdom - who has the important task to discern *sat* from *a-sat*, "good from bad", "truth from falsehood", "reality from illusion", "right knowledge from delusion", etc.[104] The kingdom itself is repeatedly imagined to be like a pond or stream (*saras*) which is always in danger of drying up and losing its shine, resulting in the withering of its lotus flowers (the people). This process of withering, waning, or drying up, is clearly connected to the 'dark' principle of time (*kāla,* which also means black), and the twists of fate or fortune. We already learn in the crucial thematic question of 1.9 that the disappearance of fortune may have something to do with the king's attitude toward Śrī, whether he values her or not, and whether he chooses to play along with *her,* and not with someone or something else. We will see that an obsessive concern with pride and masculine virility makes the Chauhan kings slumber into defeat, seemingly forgetting that kingship acquires its brilliance through the inner, female power of the self (*ātma-śakti*), namely Śrī, who is mostly attracted by the 'waking' qualities of wisdom (*buddhi, mati*) and right discernment (*viveka*).

Finally, in a crucial sense, the reader is also precisely given the task to sharpen his or her own sense of discernment, to be like a 'goose' to the poem. At the very end of his poem Nayacandra will explicitly address the attentive reader, hoping that his poem may be savored by those 'wise gooses' (*haṃsā santaḥ*) who seem nowhere to be found.[105] The reader too has to 'wake up' in order to appreciate the complexity beneath the surface layer of a praise poem, and grasp the intertwining of thematic, meta-poetic, religious-philosophical, intertextual levels. Commenting on the philosophical underpinning of

[104] Especially evident in the eighth canto, where Hammīra as it were predicts that he won't be able to reach the condition of being the 'goose of the kingdom', distinguishing between 'good and bad' (*sad-asad-viveka-kṛd rājyahaṃsatvam*, 8.52.) I discuss this verse in the third chapter.

[105] "What happened to those noble gooses who take pleasure in the quality-like-milk, and not in the harm- like -water?" (*haṃsā santaḥ kva yeṣāṃ guṇa-payasi ratir no ratir doṣa-vāriṇy...*, 14.44).

Śrīharṣa's twelfth-century *Naiṣadhīyacarita* – an important model for Nayacandra[106] - Deven Patel writes how the author "puts his audience, like his characters, in a position of having to apprehend reality from illusion."[107] Nayacandra may be doing something similar throughout his deeply tragic 'eulogy'.

A work of literature, as Indian poets and theoreticians tend to make clear, doesn't passively represent, but actively *plays* the world, re-enacts and 'activates' and intensifies reality to transform the audience, and thus effect change in the real world.[108] Not unlike the real world, the extraordinary (*a-laukika*) world of poetry is a world of guises and ambiguity, demanding the readers' full attention. At least, if we don't want to get deceived like the Chauhan protagonists of the poem, who repeatedly slumber into a fatal state of delusion, mistake their loyal devotees (*bhakta*) for foes, and vice versa. In fourteen cantos (*sarga,* "creation", or "downpour" of fluid) Nayacandra's great poem brings into being a whole new world, in which the poet *models* – to use Shulman's apt term - the whole generative and degenerative process of Chauhan history, from its inception in a beginning less time, to its gradual destruction in the recent past and ongoing remembrance in the present and future.

[106] In his epilogue Nayacandra clearly evokes Śrīharṣa as a model, which inspired his poetry. He is mentioned three times, in 14.28, 14.31, and 14.46. I discuss this influence in the conclusion to this chapter.

[107] Patel 2014: 44.

[108] As discussed by scholars like Shulman 2014: 61, 67, linking it to Don Handelman's theory of rituals as 'modeling' events; and by Edwin Gerow (in Miller 1990: 59) who remarks that Indian theater "is indeed a "play," in the metaphysical sense that its workings reveal the nature of things. It is not a "drama" in the Aristotelian sense of an "imitation," having an existence apart and form proper to itself."

Chapter 2 Sleepy kings and dancing horses: tragic patterns in Hammīra's prehistory

2.1 Imagery of decay, ironies of misplaced joy

I highlighted how HMK's monumental prologue – with its deep interplay of symbolic, thematic, religious-philosophical, intertextual and meta-poetic layers – only deceitfully frames the poem's subject matter as a story about the rise, prosperity, successes and joy of the Chauhan dynasty. As I will show in this chapter, from the third canto onwards, with the story of Pṛthvīrāja, the poem makes the inevitable and expected tragic turn. Images of decay and separation – already implicit in the prologue - take over. It is important to take this imagery seriously if we want to move beyond modern interpretations of HMK that single out its supposed concern with idealizing or glorifying kingship and warriorhood. I hope to show that the more tragic imagery is dominant, and potentially subversive in effect. Throughout the poem we repeatedly hear about a process of decay, which eventually culminates in the complete dissolution (*pralaya*) of the Chauhan dynasty, with the death of Hammīra, the widowhood of Lakṣmī (14.2), after which nothing but a story remains - of fame, or blame.

I will argue that we are repeatedly confronted with the tragic and potentially ironic tendency of fame to turn into blame. The deep irony of this process comes down to this: the tragic hero, whose efforts are deeply motivated by a desire or fear to secure a positive remembrance – gain fame, avoid blame – becomes the subject of a story that undermines the heroism of his efforts. Exposing this delusional desire to be famous becomes a major concern in the cantos about Hammīra's tragedy, which I explain at length in the fourth chapter. The cantos about Hammīra's predecessors already anticipate this tragic tendency.

Imagery of decay and blame purposefully confront idealizing modes and imagery of joy, success and satisfaction. In a typical tragic fashion, HMK's author repeatedly - and often with a sense of humor - exploits the tragic irony of misplaced joy, of untimely

celebrations and moments of restoration that only *signal* upcoming defeat. Given the inevitability of the tragic plot, episodes of 'Chauhan brilliance' often seem to serve a contrastive purpose, making the upcoming darkness come out even stronger. In the course of time's playful and degenerative process, from Pṛthvīrāja's kingship (canto 3) to that of Hammīra (9-13), Śrī's brilliance - on the Chauhan side - tends to swing, dance, play and gradually wane, until her complete disappearance from the Chauhan dynasty with the fall of Ranthambhor. This chapter seeks to demonstrate how Nayacandra models such dynamic and tragic patterns of kingship in Hammīra's prehistory. Rather than transforming tragic defeat into a heroic success, the poem exposes the mechanisms behind this human tendency itself. Instead of a concern with heroic transformations the poem reveals a strong concern to give insight into the causes of and show multiple perspectives on the tragic transformation itself, the fall from fortune to misfortune, the shift from fame to blame.

After Nayacandra introduces Hammīra as the last, brilliant gem adorning the illustrious (*śrī*, 1.12) Chauhan dynasty, we get two cantos about his predecessors, describing their glorious rise to success (*utpatti,* 1.13) and, not unimportantly, its cause (*utpatti-hetur*, 1.25). These two cantos do not tell an actual story, but gradually take the reader from the Chauhan dynasty's mythological origins and remote past, to the more remembered past. These cantos describe the gradual spread of the Chauhan's fortune (*śrī*) over time and space. The verses name and praise each new Chauhan king, mapping the geographical landscape and center of their power (the Chauhan capital of Ajmer – *Ajayameru,* 1.52, and the Śākambharī region in 1.88-89), and mentioning various conflicts with rulers from neighboring dynastic clans, both 'foreign' (*śaka*) and indigenous enemies. Like in the benediction, two cantos long the always recurring theme is that of Śrī. She appears to remain without much trouble at the Chauhan side, conferring her beautiful brilliance on a range of important thematic concerns, sovereignty (*rājya-śrī*), valor (*śaurya-śrī*), heaven (*svarga/diva-śrī*), fame (*kīrti/yaśas*) and especially victory (*jaya-śrī*). Importantly, all these different Splendors go and belong together. Let us recall that Śrī indeed constitutes one principle. And consequently, as we will see, the loss of the Splendor of sovereignty (*rājya-śrī*) or victory (*jaya-śrī*) has a darkening effect on acquisition of fame. Thus, already in these two first cantos we learn that the 'losers' – those who become separated from Śrī - swoon, fall into darkness. And the splendor of their fame too is taken away, diminishes or gets stained.[1]

As a whole, these cantos can be said to absorb the reader into the illustrious world of the early Chauhan kings and their rise (*utpatti*) to success. It looks like Nayacandra deliberately paints an illustrious, spotless background of the early Chauhan's brilliant

[1] Also worthy of note is the repeated mention in the first canto of poets (*kavi*), who are needed to spread the fame of the victors, as in 1.49, 1.56, 1.84, 1.86, 1.93.

fortune and fame – white in the Indian imagination - to make a sharp contrast with the darker tones of the closer, imaginable past, which the reader slowly enters toward the end of the second canto. We know that it won't take long before the Chauhan kings will also face defeat. They are bound to become separated from Śrī. And they will therefore also swoon and slumber into darkness. The topic of fame is therefore crucial. In an important sense, this is what is really at stake for the Chauhan heroes of the poem. This is explicitly thematized in the cantos about Hammīra, as I show in the next chapter.

Apart from depicting the brilliance of the Chauhan past - till the tragic turn in Pṛthvīrāja's story, the topic of the next section - these verses already anticipate major thematic emphases and motifs. I will limit myself to examine one striking cluster of images evoked in the penultimate verse of the first canto (1.103). It reads as some sort of conclusion, or guiding principle, in the form of a statement of praise about the Chauhan king Siṃharāja (ca. 994-971). His fame and might surpasses that of the Moon and Ocean, who embody respectively the whiteness of fame and the vastness of might. The verse comes after learning that this Chauhan king defeated the rulers of Karṇāṭa, Lāṭa, Cola, and Aṅga (1.97), and right before learning that he killed the Śaka king Hetim (1.104):

> Oh, oh! How inappropriate of the Ocean!
> Even now he instantly rejoices
> when seeing his son, the Moon
> who got defeated, indeed, by his [the Chauhan king's] fame.
> In the same way, because of his greatness
> he [the Ocean] received the submarine Fire Mare,
> and alas, now he is drying up!
> Every man sees the fault in the "other" (*parasya*)
> but not in himself![2]

This may just sound as a standard royal praise. However, it contains several of the major tragic themes in HMK: misperception, misplaced joy, mistaking fame for blame, blaming others, over-confidence in strength, giving shelter, self-consuming emotions, insatiable desires, etc. The basic image revolves around the whirling ocean, who becomes thrilled with joy when seeing his 'famous' son, the Moon, *the* symbol of fame (and its tendency to wane, or become blemished). But the verse says that the Ocean's joy is in fact highly inappropriate. The Ocean is blamed as it were for being unwilling to see that the fame of

[2] hā hā kêyam anaucitī jala-nidher adyâpi hṛṣyaty asau
yaṃ drṣṭvā jitam apy amuṣya yaśasā candraṃ muhuḥ svâṅgajam |
prāpyâitan mahasā tathâiva vaḍavā-vahniṃ ca śuṣyaty aho
sarvaḥ ko 'pi parasya paśyati jano doṣaṃ na ca svasya tam ||1.103||

his son, the Moon, is overtaken by the greater fame (*yaśasā*) of the Chauhan king. (The Moon indeed is blamed for his dark spots; and he is associated with illicit behavior, which he has to repay with its monthly waning). Moreover, in the same way the Ocean deserves to be blamed for his blind over-confidence in his physical, outer greatness. Because indeed, "in the same way", the Chauhan king also surpasses the greatness and depth of the Ocean.[3]

The Ocean's arrogant nature and misplaced joy have severe consequences for him (and the whole universe). Mythology tells us that the Ocean was given the important task of saving the world by controlling the dangerous apocalyptic fire at the bottom of his waters. This doomsday fire may represent Śiva's uncontrolled anger and passion (or seed), released from his third eye into the world when he attempted to destroy Kāma, the god of love.[4] On request of the gods, fearing the world's destruction, Brahmā had transformed this fire in the form of a female horse (*vaḍabā*), a Mare, with which he went to the great Ocean, asking him to contain and control it or *her*. It is on account of his unsurpassed greatness (*mahasā*) that the Ocean consented to accept this unquenchable fire, in the form of wild, untamable Mare. This verse implies that this act too may have been inappropriate. After all, the Ocean is indeed slowly drying up (*śuṣyati*). At the end of the end *kaliyuga,* the submarine horse will indeed come out and destroy the universe. The implication of this verse is that ultimately the Ocean is not great and strong enough to control this fire. In other words, it is meant as a praise for the much greater Chauhan king who would have made a better candidate to control this dangerous fire-horse. Importantly, this verse suggests that the great Ocean has no clue about his tragic fate (and what it causes for others). He doesn't see that he is burning up, blinded as it were by the joy of seeing the fame of his son, the Moon, whose exemplary splendor too is in fact dimmed by the greater fame of the Chauhan king. The final line sums up the general wisdom about human nature (*arthântara-nyāsa*) that can be learned from this phenomenon.

> *sarvaḥ ko 'pi parasya paśyati jano doṣaṃ na ca svasya tam*
> Everyone sees the fault in another, but not in himself

This message, including the imagery used to support it, may well serve as the guiding theme of the poem. The Chauhan protagonists (from Pṛthvīrāja onwards) will never see that they may be doing something inappropriate. Similar to the image of how the Ocean is fated to dry up, we will see that the Chauhan dynasty's 'pond-like Śrī' – a recurrent metaphor - will dry up, precisely because of the constant problem of misperception,

[3] This is standard trope in royal panegyric, also mentioned in 1.24, where the first Chauhan is said to take away the Splendor of the ocean's depth (*gāmbhīrya-lakṣmīṃ harati*).

[4] See Doniger 1971: 26, on the imagery of the ocean accepting this fire.

misplaced joy and a blinding over-confidence in one's physical, outer strength. Even when confronted with their faults and blindness, they will deny it, and confer guilt and blame on something or someone else, the "other" (*para*).

The imagery of the unquenchable fire or *female* horse (*vaḍavā*) within the Ocean is significant for other reasons. Wendy Doniger has shown how this female fire may stand for many things: one's inner heat (*tapas*), the inner power (*śakti*) or potency of the self, the prancing horse-like senses which need to be controlled, the deadly poison called *kālā-kūṭā* "the trick of time", which Śiva swallowed to save the universe when it emerged out of the cosmic ocean, or Śrī/Lakṣmī, who like the Moon is born from the Ocean's body.[5] Suggesting that all this is implied or latently present in Nayacandra's Ocean verse would be an overinterpretation. The main point is that the great Ocean is doing something wrong, he is *unaware* of the tragic process, *blinded* by pride and over-confidence. Only truly great men – like the Chauhan king Siṃharāja - *can* control this inner fire-mare, and use its potent energy, without being consumed or blinded by it.

This myth – like most Indian myths - is full of meaningful paradoxes and contradictions, which are purposefully exploited here. Doniger points out that the imagery of the fire within the ocean is often used to emphasize the Ocean's greatness, generosity and compassion, but poets typically play with potentially conflicting relations between these qualities. This is how Daniel Ingalls explains how the poet turns imagery associated with praise into messages of blame:

> The ocean is praised for its power, beneficence, respect for law, etc. (...) but blamed for its overinclusiveness, for its being too salty to drink, for its harboring dangerous monsters, for its uselessness and its noisy boasting.[6]

When reading HMK we are also repeatedly invited to look out for 'the other' side of heroic qualities. Think already of Hammīra's legendary courageousness (*sattva*) and compassion, which made him decide to give shelter to the Mongols in his kingdom, not unlike the stories about the great Ocean perhaps. Yet, in Nayacandra's version this act of harboring a potentially dangerous enemy won't be presented as an act of compassion, as I show in the fourth chapter. I will explain that Hammīra's defeat is linked to a series of misperceptions, including about the 'otherness' (*paratvam*) of the Mongols. The Chauhans are more like the Ocean in the sense of not being able to control their horse-like senses, and of being blinded by their confidence in strength and might, and Hammīra's father, Jaitrasiṃha will be blinded by his love for his son, etc. This is why the pond-like Splendor of the Chauhan dynasty will dry up.

[5] Doniger 1971: 14, 17-18.

[6] Ingalls 1965: 302.

Keeping this in mind we can proceed to the concretization of this fatal imagery in the next cantos, where we will encounter many kings who are unable to control their senses. Pṛthvīrāja will fall victim to a dancing horse; Harirāja will succumb to dancing girls; Prahlādana to a sleeping lion during a hunting expedition that is also compared to a stage of dance, and a whirling ocean, etc. All this will resonate powerfully in the story of Hammīra, including a nod, at a critical turning point, to the insatiable and unquenchable fire of the submarine mare.[7]

2.2 Falling asleep: Pṛthvīrāja's dancing horse

The first tragic turn of HMK, setting in motion the playful dynamic of the poem – the interplay between idealizing and tragic modes of narration -, takes off in the third canto. Its first verse already subtly announces the fatal condition underlying the many 'tragic flaws' to which the Chauhans will succumb: sleepiness. This canto is wholly devoted to the story of the (in)famous Pṛthvīrāja Chauhan, who by the time of HMK's composition had become the epitome of the reckless and 'sleepy' ruler, defeated by Shahabuddin Muhammad Ghori in the second battle of Tarain.[8] To understand or appreciate the effect of the tragic turn, we need to briefly reflect on what came before.

The description of the Chauhans' genealogy takes a different turn when we reach the reign of king Someśvara (2.67) in the second half of the second canto. Unlike the descriptions of the previous kings, there is also a queen, named Karpūradevī. We are about to hear a real narrative, with a plot that is structured around a set of connected events. The couple got a son, whom they named Pṛthvīrāja, who like the sun gladdened the lotus-eyes of the people (2.76). After giving his son instructions in warfare and scriptures (*śastreṣu śāstreṣu*), Someśvara handed over the burden of the kingdom (*sāmrājya-bhāraṃ*) and left his mortal body by the path of *yoga* (2.77). The twenty-three remaining verses of this chapter praise the extraordinary qualities of Pṛthvīrāja in the conventional panegyric style of *kāvya,* about the whiteness of his fame, the weight of his virtues, his unparalleled generosity, and so on. In other words, they continue the tone of

[7] Namely when the clever (or cunning?) brahmins (*vāḍavāḥ*) who are compared to "wicked submarine mares" or "submarine mares to the wicked" (*duṣkarmôdadhi-vāḍavāḥ*, 9.79) almost trick Hammīra into giving away all his wealth in an all-consuming Vedic sacrifice in celebration of Hammīra's tragically incomplete world-conquest. These brahmins will be dancing on their piles of gold (9.94).

[8] As explored in Talbot 2016. I engage with her analysis of Pṛthvīrāja's literary trajectory in chapter three.

the descriptions of Pṛthvīrāja's illustrious predecessors, some of whom had 'also' defeated a foreign ruler named Shahabuddin (*sahābadīna*).[9] Worthy of attention is how one verse toward the end describes how the goddess of fortune, Lakṣmī (*indīrā*), left Viṣṇu to sleep in the Chauhan king's lotus-hand (*bheje yasya śayālutāṃ śaya-payojanmany asāv indīrā,* 2.84). As a result, Śrī's divine husband, who is (still) in love with her (*tad-rāgeṇa*), follows his wife by reincarnating in the form of Pṛthvīrāja's sword.

These are of course stock phrases in royal panegyric, meant to represent Pṛthvīrāja as an ideal of kingship. Pṛthvīrāja's royal qualities – his strength, valor, generosity, etc. – symbolically attract Lakṣmī, who abandons her divine husband to sleep with the Chauhan king on earth, Viṣṇu's alter ego on earth. However, by dropping the word 'sleepiness' (*śayālutāṃ*), Nayacandra seems to already anticipate the tragic shift in the opening verse of the third canto. Nayacandra appears to remind the audience of the popular imagery of Pṛthvīrāja as the epitome of the sleepy ruler. The audience indeed knows that his story will be a story of defeat, connected to that crucial moment in South Asian history, namely the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate. We know therefore from the outset that it will be impossible for our poet to dissociate Pṛthvīrāja's life story from these events. Telling a story about Pṛthvīrāja's fame cannot remain without casting some spots of blame. In other words, even when being immersed in the triumphant part the reader is eagerly awaiting the 'tragic turn', while looking out for clues that might explain the inevitable shift from fortune to misfortune.

And indeed, the very first verse of the third chapter again drops the word 'sleepy' (*śayālum*). Somewhat paradoxically perhaps, the repetition of this word wakes or shakes the reader from the dream-like brilliance from the preceding cantos. Let me quote the three opening verses which form one grammatical and thematic unit (- which I will split in three sentences):

> It happened that the Western kings had enough of the persecutions
> of Shahabuddin, the Śaka who was speedily spreading out
> the whole wide and sleepy Earth-surface in his own hand.
> They put someone forward who, by bringing joy to the entire, real Earth,
> was leading his own name to its true meaning:
> the illustrious Candrarāja -the Moon King -whose stage
> was bestowed by the city of Gopācala (Gwalior).
> And then, with high speed, they resorted to the entrance
> of Pṛthvīrāja's abode - the one who had conquered his enemies with the strength of his arms -
> bringing with them elephants as strategic gifts, with the rut (*mada*)

[9] Thus, king Durlabharāja in 2.28, and Viśvala in 2.37.

dripping from their globes, making wet some parts of the Earth.[10]

These verses inaugurate the long-awaited tragic turn. To fully appreciate the tragic turn of the first verse it is worth zooming in on the chosen imagery and words, and their poetic effect. The all-important word sleepy (*śayāluṃ*) is clearly underlined by its placement right after the first metrical pause, and its meaning reinforced by the alliterative succession of the soft (and sleepy?) sibilant sounds sā-sā-śa-sva-śa-śa, and through the overall harmonious repetition of syllables continuing in the third pāda (*atha prathīyas tarasā rasāyās talaṃ śayāluṃ sva-śaye śakena sahābadīnena vitanvatâlam.*[11] This harmony is audibly interrupted by the word that follows the metrical pause: *upadrutāḥ* "oppressed"(-thus *talaṃ* - pause – *śayālum*, has a very different ring than *tālaṃ* - pause – *upadrutāḥ* in the second line). Taken together with the previous 'sleepiness' (*śayālutām*) six verses earlier (2.84), this verse introduces the first of many reversals in the poem. Lakṣmī, Viṣṇu's wife, who had descended on earth to sleep in the hand or bed (*śaya*) of Pṛthvīrāja, is probably going to sleep with Shahabuddin – the imagery used is the same.[12]

These verses need some further unpacking if we want to understand and appreciate the layered texture of this new, monumental opening, marking a clear break from the preceding two cantos. It introduces four important male characters, who all have a special relationship to the female Earth (*rasā, bhūmi, dhātrī, pṛthvī*). We have the anonymous and oppressed "western kings" (*paścima-bhūmipāla*), who are no longer capable of performing their royal role as "protectors of the earth" (*bhūmi-pāla*). This is because their oppressor, the Śaka king, is making the whole earth sleep in *his* own hand or bed (*śaya*). Then we have the Moon King, Candrarāja, associated with Gwalior – about which more below – who *truly* gladdens the complete earth. And finally, we have king Pṛthvīrāja, whose very

[10] atha prathīyas tarasā rasāyās talaṃ śayāluṃ sva-śaye śakena |
sahābadīnena vitanvatâlam upadrutāḥ paścima-bhūmipālāḥ ||3.1||
āhlādanenâkhila-bhūta-dhātryā yathârthatāṃ nāma nijaṃ nayantam |
gopācala-draṅga-vitīrṇa-raṅgaṃ śrī-candra-rājaṃ purato nidhāya ||3.2||
upāyanânīta-mahebha-kumbha-galan-madârdrīkṛta-bhūmi-bhāgam |
bhejur bhujôrjā-vijitâri-pṛthvīrājâlaya-dvāram udāra-vegāḥ ||3.3||

[11] The soft sibilants indeed may sound 'sleepy'. This is similar to Germanic languages like the Dutch "in slaap sussen" (to make someone sleep by using soft words). By contrast, the more playful sound 'l', which in succession typically imitates the wagging, 'lolling', or swaying sound of playful back and forth movements, as in Sanskrit words for playing, *lal, las, līlā, lola,* etc. Thus, in a verse like 4.10 we almost hear the playful movements of the dancing girls in Harirāja's court when they start to dance, "enticing the eyes of men, with their shining beauty and playful movements" or *lasal-lāvaṇya-līlābhir loka-locana-lobhanāḥ.*

[12] The imagery might contain a subtle dig at the Chauhan king, whose name means 'king of the earth' (*pṛthvī-rāja*). Like the king's symbolic relation to Lakṣmī, he is also indeed the husband, enjoyer and protector of the earth (*pṛthvī-pati, bhū-pati*, etc.). Now we learn that Shahabuddin is carrying out that role, he is putting the exhausted, 'sleepy earth' to rest in his hand/bed, *śaya*. Shahabuddin, moreover, is presented in 3.10 as an incarnation of Viṣṇu himself, namely as Paraśurāma (*bhārgavo*) born again to kill all the warriors.

name means "King of the Earth". Interestingly, the oppressed kings from the west have arrived at his gate with elephants, whose rutting globes – a symbol of intoxication and uncontrolled virility – are making wet parts of the earth (*bhūmi-bhāgam*).

All this imagery, with its clear emphasis on the Earth - and her juiciness, which may also be audible in the words and imagery chosen (*ta**rasā rasāyas** talam**, galan-madârdrīkṛta-bhūmi*) - has a purpose. Like Śrī's symbolic relation to the king, the Earth too represents another wife of him. The king is a protector, supporter and enjoyer of the earth (*bhūmi-pāla, bhū-bhṛt, bhū-bhuj*, etc.). All this is suggested in this verse, which unmistakably plays with the meaning of Pṛthvīrāja's name "King of the Earth". The second verse indeed makes explicit the importance of rendering true one's name – a major concern throughout HMK, not always in a positive sense. Implicitly these opening verses confront us with this question: will Pṛthvīrāja, like Candrarāja of Gwalior, be able to live up to the meaning of his name and gladden the earth? Or will she dry up during his reign? In short, the opening verses thus subtly signal a break from the idealistic descriptions of the preceding two cantos. From the third canto onward, we enter the phase in the Chauhan clan's long history where the brilliance of Royal Fortune will begin to wane or dry up, like a pond in the "hot season" (3.5), as I show below.

Two elements are worth some closer consideration: the clear nod to Nayacandra's present context of Gwalior, and the intertextual modeling on Kālidāsa's poetry. Let me start with the former. I would dare to suggest, that our poet *Naya-candra* "the Moon of Leadership/Wisdom" subtly inscribes himself in the second verse through the spokesman Candrarāja "the Moon king", "whose stage was granted by the city of Gwalior", and who was leading (*nayantam*) his name to his true meaning by gladdening the entire (*akhila*) and *real* (*bhūta*) – or entirely real - earth. This Candrarāja of Gwalior is clearly not a "normal king". In verse 3.6 it is said that the brightness of his teeth completely took away the pride of the Moon's Splendor (*candra-śrī-garva*). As he spoke, "it was as if he was spreading out the radiant waves from the milky ocean of speech, shining from his heart" (*hṛdy-ullasad-vāṅ-maya-dugdha-sindhor avistārayaṃs tāratarān ivôrmī*). For sure, this is not a king, not even a Tomar king – they are strikingly absent from Nayacandra's history of the Chauhans.[13] He looks more like a poet, a man of speech, whose words are strikingly reminiscent of Kālidāsa's verses. This brings me to my second point.

The reader, familiar with Kālidāsa, would indeed immediately hear a modelling on the second canto of his epic *Kumārasambhava*, which continues throughout the first part of this canto. In Kālidāsa's poem the gods are in distress by the demon Tāraka. They approach Brahmā to make an end to his suffering, placing Indra – the king of the gods –

[13] See my discussion on this point in section 5.2 "Dangerous allusions and delusions: the Tomar's absence in the Chauhan past?" in chapter five.

in front.[14] Nayacandra purposefully mirrors the scene. Nayacandra's Shahabuddin is modelled on Kālidāsa's Tāraka, his anonymous 'western kings' are Kālidāsa's gods; Nayacandra's curious character called Candrarāja, the "King of the Moon" is Kālidāsa's Indra, the king of the gods, (2.1) or perhaps rather Bṛhaspati, the Lord of Speech (*vācaspati,* 2.30), preceptor of the gods; and finally Pṛthvīrāja seems to play the role of Brahmā, who will offer his help to end the suffering. This modelling works, more or less, in the first part of this canto. But the roles seem to be somehow inverted in the second part. Evidently this is because a Śiva-like Shahabuddin eventually defeats a sleepy (and demon-like?) Pṛthvīrāja.

Let me briefly elaborate on how Nayacandra purposefully adopts Kālidāsa's imagery, but intensifies it, expands on it and inverts it. The problem of sleep thus also occurs in *Kumārasambhava* right in the beginning, in verse 2.2, which describes the withering Splendor of the god's faces (*parimlāna-mukha-śriyām*). Fortunately, they are made to shine again by Brahmā's appearance, which is like the sun to the pond with sleeping lotuses (*sarasāṃ supta-padmānāṃ*). It first looks like Pṛthvīrāja will play a similar shining, awakening role. Like Kālidāsa's Brahmā in 2.19, Nayacandra's Pṛthvīrāja asks about the reason behind their loss of Śrī:

> When Pṛthvīrāja saw their sad faces, he asked his servants:
> Why, like ponds in the Time of summer, don't these kings display their splendor (*śriyam*)?[15]

Importantly, Pṛthvīrāja's ominous question implicitly re-introduces Time as the scorching heat of the submarine mare (*vaḍavā*). Thus, the expression for the "time of summer" (*kāle nidāgha-saṃjñe*), which dries up the pond-like Splendor of kings, may be evoking the Vedic myth of Saṃjñā, the wife of the Sun. She is said to have assumed the form of a mare to escape the Sun's burning heat (*nidāgha*), to perform *tapas* - austerities, which generates inner heat - elsewhere.[16] Interestingly indeed, the answer Pṛthvīrāja will get to his question is that Shahabuddin's self-generated 'heat' is scorching the earth:

> By the power of his austerities
> Shahabuddin, the Śaka king – lord of the earth –
> has gained supreme virility.
> As it were like the comet Dhūmaketu, he is born again to bring ruin
> to the warrior race on this earth.[17]

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[14] Kumārasambhava 2.1

[15] dīnânanāṃs tān pravilokya pṛthvīrājas tataḥ pārśva-carān uvāca |
kāle sarāṃsîva nidāgha-saṃjñe śriyaṃ kim ete dadhate na bhūpāḥ ||3.5||

[16] See Doniger 1971: 15-17 for the myth of Sañjñā.

[17] tapaḥ-prabhāvârjita-varya-vīryaḥ śahābadīnaḥ śaka-medinînaḥ |
upaplavāyâjani dhūma-ketur ivâvanau bāhuja-maṇḍalānām ||3.7||

Let me note again that this verse purposefully resonates with Kālidāsa's description of the demon Tāraka in 2.32, who was given a boon by Brahmā that he could only be slain by a son of Śiva (the supreme ascetic). Ultimately, however, the adopted template doesn't work. There's a deliberate dissonance. Although Pṛthvīrāja will spread forth his Śrī, then triumph and fulfill his promise of protection, it is the Chauhan king who eventually ends up being defeated. In fact, Candrarāja, the spokesman of Gwalior, compares Shahabuddin to the powerful Śiva himself, destroyer of the three cities (3.12). And indeed, Shahabuddin will defeat Pṛthvīrāja by means of a trick involving a female horse, a mare called Nāṭârambhā, "The Beginning of Dance" (3.58), which is also found in the *prabandha* literature.[18]

Let us have a closer look at how Nayacandra models this first tragic transformation, because its 'logic' will repeat itself throughout the poem. He structures the story of Pṛthvīrāja according to how his story was remembered at his time, namely as a triumph-turned-defeat story. The Chauhan king's initial victory over Shahabuddin – typically remembered as a set of victories - was shortly followed by his tragic death, the fall of Ajmer, and the establishment of Sultanate rule in Delhi. It is in accordance with this well-known story, as it is told in some *prabandha* texts, that Nayacandra structures the third canto into two parts, a story about the Chauhan king's victory, followed by a story about his defeat. Nayacandra's version, however, contains many audible silences, which must have been clear to Nayacandra's early-fifteenth century audience. This has to do with the fact that at this time Pṛthvīrāja was clearly *not* remembered for his heroic virtues.[19] I will return to this point.

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[18] The episode of the dancing horse may therefore have been borrowed from narrative material preserved in the Jain *prabandha* literature, which contains a similar episode about a horse called Nāṭârambhā. The *Pṛthvīrājaprabandha* (edited or rather compiled in Jinavijaya 1936: 86-7, from a mss. P from 1470 and B from the early sixteenth c.), may have actually inspired Nayacandra's own account of Pṛthvīrāja, or vice versa, as evidenced by the many shared details. The story similarly pokes fun at Pṛthvīrāja's sleepiness. The *prabandha* is much more direct in its criticism. For example, right before the battle with Shahabuddin, "Pṛthvīrāja fell asleep. For ten days no one could wake him up. Everyone who wakes him up, is put to death." (*atha pṛthvīrājaḥ prasuptaḥ dināni 10 para ko 'pi na jāgarayati/ yo jāgarayati taṃ mārayati*). He also "runs off after mounting his horse Nāṭârambhā" (*nāṭārambhāśve āruhya pranaṣṭaḥ*), but the horse returns to dance (*turago narttituṃ pravṛtto*) when the enemy sounds the instruments. Given the late date of the *prabandha* manuscript, it may also be possible that the author of this story had borrowed from Nayacandra's poem. Cynthia Talbot has recently discussed these similarities and difference in these texts, also noting that some borrowing must have occurred (2016: 54-6).

[19] A point that is also emphasized in Talbot 2016. She draws attention to Pṛthvīrāja's early literary trajectory as an incompetent 'sleepy' ruler, while highlighting that a shift toward a much more positive portrayal took place with the composition of *Pṛthvīrājarāso*. This textual tradition, which is the main focus

Let me start by explaining how this 'triumph-turned-defeat' narrative logic works. The triumphant part is already tragic in the sense that it is loaded with a deep tension of what is called dramatic irony or the irony of fate: the dramatic effect on the reader when experiencing the gap between his or her knowledge of the plot and the character's ignorance of the fatal effects of his acts, words and choices.[20] It is this tension that makes up much of the charm of tragic plots. The audience perceives the hero's initial success from an uneasy distance. After all, we know what the rejoicing protagonist doesn't, namely that his triumph will not last. Each time Nayacandra deliberately exploits the irony of the inevitable twist of fortune. For example, in one later episode the Chauhan victory drums literally signal the upcoming defeat.[21] In Pṛthvīrāja's story the ironic reversal is exploited through the imagery of a peacock. The context is as follows. When the Chauhan king is confronted with Shahabuddin's destructive campaigns west of his kingdom, he heroically proclaims that he will capture Shahabuddin with a special martial "peacock-lock". The episode is framed as a heroic promise to protect the western kings who have arrived at the Chauhan capital – there may be a nod here also to the traditional plot of the Hammīra legend. Thus, Pṛthvīrāja, instigated by Candrarāja's speech, proclaims with a (blinding?) over-confidence:

> "I'm not born in the Chauhan dynasty
> unless I capture him with the peacock-lock,
> and throw him at your lotus-feet."
> This the king promised.[22]

Pṛthvīrāja clearly takes pride in his Chauhan ancestry. And with good reason – in the context of the poem -: before him his predecessors appear to have never lost a battle. But we can already sense the inevitable reversal. We know that Pṛthvīrāja will eventually be captured. Nevertheless, Pṛthvīrāja wins the ensuing battle, and therefore "duly fulfilled his promise" (*apūpurat svāṃ vidhi-vat pratijñām*), after having captured Shahabuddin with the use of trickery (*prasahya kiṃcic chalam ākalayya*, 3.43) – his peacock-lock? In fact, the whole first triumph part doesn't really read like the actual completion or fulfillment of

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of her work, "entirely alters the significance of Prithviraj [...] through its lavish praise of the king and his followers, who are presented as the epitome of Indian warriorhood" (p. 67).

[20] Colebrook 2005: 14-15, who notes that this effect was not labeled as irony until the nineteenth century.

[21] This happens in canto nine where Hammīra's general Bhīmasiṃha as it were 'invites' the dispersed but yet unconquered enemy to kill him by signaling victory with the drums looted from the enemy. The episode is discussed in chapter three.

[22] mayūra-bandhena nibandhya nâinaṃ padâravinde yadi vaḥ kṣipāmi |
jāto 'nvaye tarhi na cāhamāne iti pratijñām akaron nareśaḥ ||3.15||

Pṛthvīrāja's promise or fate. There are, again, several clues signaling the reversal, and Pṛthvīrāja's upcoming confusion. Perhaps his shaky confusion can already be heard in the verse immediately following his heroic promise:

> Then, with his Splendor spread forth, and with his victory
> fixed in the constellation (*yoga*) of all the auspicious planets
> he marched forth, shaking
> with desire to churn his adversaries,
> with the flux of his mind un-
> confused.[23]

The idea is that Pṛthvīrāja is *shaking* (*cañcan*) with martial desire, because, he desires – as it were – "to churn" his enemies (*mātha,* also "killing", but from *math*).[24] We may wonder whether Pṛthvīrāja's mind-flux (*citta-vṛtti*) is also (already) being churned, and that his victory is not entirely fixed in the 'constellation' (*yoga*) of planets.[25] Indeed, Nayacandra ambiguously presents Pṛthvīrāja's state of mind as 'un-confused' or *a-vyākula*, whereby the negating *a* phonetically disappears in the instrumental ending of the preceding word.

The real shift comes later. This is how Nayacandra introduces the first dangerous rupture in the Chauhan dynasty's Fortune. It comes after Pṛthvīrāja 'completed' his promise to capture Shahabuddin and took away his pride:

> After giving him clothes with a brilliance attractive even to the gods, the king released him, thinking: "If I kill him, who indeed would again desire to perform [with me] on the stage of battle without deception (*a-māyayā*)?"[26]

> In this way, at seven separate occasions
> the king interrupted the stage of battle
> and completely subdued the Yavana king.
> He withered away, and became exhausted,
> that greatly malicious man.[27]

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[23] tatas tata-śrīḥ śubha-kāri-sarva-grahe vilagne vijaye ca yoge |
cacāla cañcan pratipanthi-mātha-cikīrṣayâvyākula-citta-vṛttiḥ ||3.16||

[24] I take *cañca*n instead of *cañcat-* in the edition. This is what the commentary has, as well as the unedited manuscript from Jodhpur. The commentator glosses it as *dīpyamānaḥ* "shining, flickering", which also connotes the perceived trembling movement of *cañc.,* but doesn't resonate with the imagery of churning in this verse.

[25] There may be a nod here to Patañjalī's famous definition of *yoga.*

[26] vāsāṃsi datvā sura-loka-lobhi-mahāṃsi tasmā iti rāḍ mumoca |
hate 'tra ko nāma punar vidhitsur amāyayā saṅgara-raṅgam evam ||3.45||

[27] pṛthak-pṛthak-saṅgara-raṅga-bhaṅgyêtthaṃ sapta-kṛtvaḥ kṣitivāsavena |
vinirjito 'sau yavanâvanīśo mamlau ca jaglau ca bhṛśaṃ nṛśaṃsaḥ ||3.46||

We have encountered Pṛthvīrāja's "tragic flaw". He seems to be *too* good, too courageous (*sattva*) perhaps. Or maybe rather, he *loves* fighting. He loves it so much that he decides to capture and release his enemy seven times, and thus repeatedly breaks off the 'real' martial union. The word *bhaṅgi,* "interruption or break", is crucial here. We can even literally hear the break, because of an 'incorrect' metrical split in the word *rupture* itself. The caesura (*yati*) thus falls where the ending of *bhaṅgyā* goes over into the next word *ittham,* something that would be considered a fault (*doṣa*) in the used meter.[28] The 'incorrect' caesura breaks the harmonious repetition of the preceding words: *pṛthak pṛthak saṅgara-raṅga bhaṅgye-*| pause|*-ttham.* (And the word *pṛthak* itself may be suggestive of the upcoming 'separation').

This verse almost literally opens up the first of many subsequent ruptures in the poem, signaling Lakṣmī's inevitable disappearance from the Chauhan camp. The idea is that killing one's 'beloved' enemy would deprive the Chauhan kings of the *joy* of fighting with a great warrior like Shahabuddin, his only match who -according to the Chauhan king - fights without deceit (*a-māyayā*). This somehow entails an unnecessary prolonging of the war, creating a pause or break as it were, so he can fight him again in the future. Hammīra is going to repeat this tragic choice, using almost exactly the same argument when given the opportunity to kill his enemy Alauddin: "if he is killed here, with whom then will I have fun in battle?" (*hate'trâmā raṃsye 'haṃ kena saṃgare*, 13.36.)[29] In both episodes there may be some latent erotic tension, which often becomes explicit in other battle scenes. Importantly, Nayacandra will later denounce this martial behavior as resulting from a shaking 'itch' for battle, for killing - for the sake of killing.[30] Moreover, this behavior is linked to overconfidence and selfishness. Both Chauhan kings indeed deem themselves invincible. They *think* that they can take such risks.

The reader of course knows better. Contrary to the Chauhan king's assumption that Shahabuddin fights without deceit, the physically exhausted Śaka king is mentally more clever. He will thus actually resort to the use of deception (*māyā*), which after all is the name of the game.[31] The rest of the canto clearly stresses the fatal nature of Pṛthvīrāja's blind overconfidence in his strength, and his foolish choice to release Shahabuddin again and again. The irony gradually deepens as we move toward the end. In verse 3.52 we learn how Pṛthvīrāja makes fun of Shahabuddin's return, boasting that he defeated him hundred times. He considers him reckless (*cāpala*), like a child holding on to his ego

[28] I got this idea when reading this verse with Vidwan H.V. Nagaraja Rao who immediately noted this fault in the meter, saying that Nayacandra made a mistake.

[29] I'm not sure how to translate *amā*.

[30] See chapter three.

[31] I elaborate on this at the end of section 4.4.

(*ahaṅkāra*). Thinking this way, he decides to counter him "with only a small retinue" (*tuccha-paricchado 'pi).* From the reader's perspective, however, it becomes clear that Pṛthvīrāja acts recklessly. He is blinded by over-confidence. He thinks he is invincible, and proceeds with only a small army. But the reader has already learned about Shahabuddin's regained strength, and his successful capture of the nearby city of Delhi (3.50). And immediately after Pṛthvīrāja's fatal thoughts, we learn about Shahabuddin's deceitful plan to bribe Pṛthvīrāja's horse-master and musicians with gifts of gold (3.54). They will deceive the king during the subsequent attack, in the early morning, at the moment of twilight, when there is only a little light (*prakāśa-kalpe,* 3.56). The commentary makes explicit that this means an "attack on sleeping men" (*sauptikam*), reminiscent of the apocalyptic tenth book of the *Mahābhārata* where the sleeping Pāṇḍava camp is slayed. But it is also clearly suggestive of Pṛthvīrāja's legendary sleepiness in other stories at the time, his inability to control his senses. Let us briefly consider how this leads to the crucial scene of Pṛthvīrāja's dancing horse Nāṭârambhā, "Beginning of Dance" and his subsequent captivity and death.

> The battle had commenced on all sides. The master of horses, nudged by the Śaka, gave a horse to the king, named Nāṭārambhā, which he was eager to mount. Those musicians with their minds seized by the Śaka noticed that he had mounted that horse. They then started to play those instruments that were beloved by the best of heroes, the *mṛdaṅga, bherī* and other drums. The sounds of these instruments put to shame the deep rumbling of swollen clouds. The horse heard this and started to dance like a peacock. Instantly the king became bewildered. "Hold steady! Don't despair!" Participating in such speeches, the *yavanas* - like sparrows a snake - quickly encircled him, who was in such a state, confused as to what to do.[32]

Although Pṛthvīraja – the king of the earth (*bhū-pati*) manages to put up a last heroic fight before he falls and gets tied up (3.64), the symbolic significance of this crucial episode can hardly be underestimated. The bewildered (*vi-lakṣaḥ,* literally "without aim", 3.60) and confused (*mūḍha*) king is not able to control this prancing horse. This horse indeed looks like the embodiment of Pṛthvīrāja's uncontrolled senses, his blinding pride, over-confidence and martial lust. The female horse named Nāṭârambhā, "Beginning of Dance"

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[32] pravarttamāne samare samantāc chakena nunnena tadâśvapena |
turaṅgamas tena nṛpāya nāṭârambhâbhidhāno 'śvayate dadāṇaḥ ||3.58||
tam aśvam ārūḍham amuṃ vibhāvya śakâtta-cittā atha tauryikās te |
avīvadan vīra-vara-priyāṇi mṛdaṅga-bherī-paṭahâdikāni ||3.59||
abhyunnatâmbhodhara-dhīra-garji-vitarjinaṃ tūrya-ravaṃ niśamya |
pranartituṃ barhiṇavat pravṛtte tārkṣye vilakṣaḥ kṣaṇam āsa bhūpaḥ ||3.60||
bhaja sthiratvaṃ vraja mā viṣādaṃ ity ukti-bhājo yavanā javena |
kiṃkāryatā-mūḍham amuṃ tathā-stham aveṣṭayan drāk caṭakā ivâhim||3.61||

can be said to symbolically inaugurate the beginning of the Chauhan's waning Splendor, a tragic history of overly proud kings unable to yoke their horse-like senses. In short, a king who promises to capture his enemy with a particular martial lock named after the peacock (*mayūra-bandhena,* 3.15) ends up dead because of a trick involving a horse that dances like a peacock (3.61). The peacock and dance imagery will powerfully resonate throughout the poem. Let me already note that the tragedy of Hammīra's story is also introduced by a dancing girl called Dhārādevī "The Queen of Flow" – or the queen of the Paramara capital "Dārā". She is trained by the unjustly blinded and castrated minister Dharmasiṃha "Lion Dharma", an adept in Bharata's Nāṭyaśāstra, to deceive Hammīra and avenge injustice.

This dancing queen can be said to play the symbolic role of Hammīra's misplaced attention, his unwillingness to pay attention to his more important symbolic wife Royal Fortune, who also likes to play and dance. Dhārādevī thus makes an ominous return at the beginning of the penultimate thirteenth canto, at the height of Hammīra's hubris, when after two days of fighting he starts festivities in the fort.[33] As usual, the shift is announced by the ominous time marker "the other day" (*anyadā,* 13.1). After describing the enjoyments of the men at court, and learning for example, how (the would-be-traitor) "Ratipāla (Protector of Pleasure) was laughing and laughing as he brought pleasure to the assembly" (*hāsaṃ hāsaṃ sṛjan goṣṭhīṃ ratipālo ratiṃ dadhau*) we are suddenly told in 13.17 to

> Look how that dancer Dhārādevi started to dance![34]

The whole subsequent dancing scene, where she apparently dances in defiance to Alauddin's nearby encampment, may be really intended to break Hammīra's over-confidence and excessive pride of the previous canto. Interesting to note is that her gestures are said to quiver like blossoms of the "creeper of delusion" (*mohana-vratateḥ,* 13.18), and that she was performing the most beautiful "peacock posture" (*māyurâsana-bandhena*, 13.23). The whole episode is clearly meant to echo the ironic reversal in Pṛthvīrāja's story. A skilled archer in Alauddin's camp shoots her from the ramparts, causing the king and others to become instantly "marked by bewilderment" (*vailakṣya-*

[33] In the preceding canto we learn that Hammīra, "loaded with intense joy and excessive pride" (*harṣa-prakarṣam ati-mānam udvahan,* 12.3) laughed at Alauddin's arrival, boasting that there's plenty of food in the fort (12.4). Alauddin therefore seems to realize that his army, which encircled the fort, is disadvantaged. He seems to be asking for peace, when telling Hammīra that he can ask whatever he wants. But Hammīra, the greatest *kṣatriya* (*kṣatrôttamo*) explains that for brave warriors (*doṣmatām*) there's no greater wish than war or battle (*āyodhanād*, 12.6). Alauddin, similarly cast as the greatest Śaka (*śakôttamaḥ*), grants Hammīra his wish, praising the warrior's vow (*kṣātra-vrate stuti-mukho*, 12.7).

[34] ...pravṛttā narituṃ dhārādevī sôtpaśya nartakī

lakṣitāḥ, 13.33), just like "king (Pṛthvīrāja) instantly became bewildered, when the horse started to dance like a peacock" (*pranartituṃ barhiṇavat pravṛtte tārkṣye vilakṣaḥ kṣaṇam āsa bhūpaḥ*, 3.60). In other words, Pṛthvīrāja's dancing horse Nāṭārambhā clearly makes her return in Hammīra's tragedy as Dharmasiṃha's dancing girl Dhārādevī. And so does Pṛthvīrāja's delusional reasoning, as explained before.

It is worth noting, briefly, that the whole scene of Dhārādevi's dance, vividly described in the opening verses (13.1-38) of Nayacandra's thirteenth canto, becomes a trope in famous later poems like Padmanābha's *Kānhaḍade-prabandha* (1455) and Jayasi's *Padmāvat* (1540). I would argue that the authors of these poems purposefully model the story of their main heroes along the lines of the Hammīra legend.[35]

In the case of Nayacandra's version of Pṛthvīrāja's story, all the recurrent ironies and ambivalences do not mean that the Chauhan king emerges as completely foolish king, unworthy of praise and respect. Nayacandra's account of this (in)famous Chauhan king is somehow unique in the sense that it *attempts* to cover up his well-known flaws – his legendary pleasure-addiction with his wife, the mistreatment of his minister, his conflict with Jayacandra, the conditions of his death. But the whole canto clearly ends on a dark and ambivalent note, which is suggestive of Pṛthvīrāja's flawed vision on *dharma,* what is right. Thus, during his captivity, Shahabuddin is asked by someone to return the favor, and release Pṛthvīrāja just once (3.69). The Śaka king refuses and explains that this is precisely the conduct that leads to the loss of kingship. He clearly makes fun of those who hold on to a chivalric code, dictating to capture and release one's enemy again and again. He thus explains that this is why they call them (*ete*)– the Hindus (*hindukā*) according to the commentator - "those from whom the secret doctrine of kingship is running away" (*vidravad-rājanyakôpaniṣadas,* 3.70). Especially interesting is the general human wisdom (*arthântara-nyāsa*) concluding the episode (3.71).

> Alas, alas! Everywhere, the lowest men are blind and deaf
> in distinguishing between proper or improper acts.[36]

[35] A variation of the scene occurs in *Kānhaḍade-prabandha*, on p. 40-41 in the translation by Bhatnagar 1991. This parallel and the trope itself is briefly discussed in Michael Bednar's dissertation (2007: 228-9), reflecting on its significance as an "attempt to strip or regain honor" (230). Aditya Behl (2012: 206, emphasis added) has observed how in Jayasi's famous *Padmāvat* "[t]he sequence of events that follows [the shooting of the dancing girl episode] *is taken directly* from the Rajput poetic accounts of the siege of Ranthambhor as exemplified in texts such as Nayacandra suri's *Hammīra mahākāvya.*" It is also one of the core scenes depicted in a series of early nineteenth century court paintings illustrating the story of *Hamīrhaṭh* "Hammīra's obstinacy". In the conclusion to this dissertation I elaborate on my view that the story of Hammīra may have provided the basic narrative template of many post-fifteenth century Rajput tales.

[36] ...kāryâkārya-vicāraṇândha-badhirā hā hā 'dhamāḥ sarvataḥ

The reader is left to wonder, whether this critique applies to Pṛthvīrāja, or Shahabuddin, or both. Again, the imagery of deafness and blindness will resonate throughout the poem, mostly to reveal the stupidity and delusion (*moha*) of the Chauhan side, their lack of right discernment (*viveka*), which is also implicit in this verse. At the end of the poem it is even used to dig at the delusions of Nayacandra's intended audience (14.15), in whose ears and eyes there is always something that is prancing around (*valgati,* 14.14).[37] We do learn in this canto that Pṛthvīrāja, the head-ornament of the garland of kings, reaches eternal bliss in heaven, after managing to call to mind, to his *firm mind* (*sthira-manās*), that which Shaivas call 'Śiva', Buddhists call 'Sugata', and Jains call omniscience (3.72). In other words, Pṛthvīrāja's story ends how it started, namely by resuming the idealistic tone of the first triumphant part.

The point is that there is something odd about this idealistic framing, an audible dissonance. I will show that Nayacandra, in fact, is playfully postponing the critique associated with Pṛthvīrāja's story. It will gradually spread to the story of his descendants, and infect the story of Hammīra, the *main* hero, one of the most popular historical heroes at the time. But unlike Pṛthvīrāja, he won't be saved from more explicit criticism. Pṛthvīrāja's tragedy only forms the tragic-heroic prelude to the more tragi-comic histories of his descendants, who will repeat his tragedy, in distinct ways. Each time a king will fall victim to a fatal state of 'sleepiness', which takes many different forms. It will also become harder to accept the 'truthfulness' of the heroic framing, that it does more than repeating the clichés of royal panegyric, which may intensify the darker side of the 'real', tragic story of kingship.

2.3 Debunking the heroic frame

From Pṛthvīrāja's story onwards, HMK becomes more explicit in highlighting the failures and flaws of 'sleepy' Chauhan kings. (Or perhaps rather, several of Pṛthvīrāja's well-known traditional flaws are being displaced to his lesser known descendants.) His brother Harirāja thus falls victim to an obsession with dancing girls (*nārttikīs*), sent to him by an anonymous but illustrious (*śrī*) Gurjara king to increase the Chauhan king's satisfaction (4.2). Unfortunately, Harirāja's eyes and mind drown in the ocean of their beauty (*āsāṃ lāvaṇya-vāridhau magne dṛg-manasī*, 4.11). Neglecting his duties as a king, Harirāja's subjects "instantly turned their affection away for him, like a beautiful woman from an

[37] See my discussion of this canto in chapter four.

ugly man" (*virajyante sma tasmāt srāk stritamā durbhagād iva*, 4.15) and abandoned his service (*tasya sevām ahāsiṣuḥ*, 4.24).

Kingship, indeed, is all a matter of attraction and gaining the affection of the right people – or the right woman – by cultivating the right royal qualities. The beautiful and charming Lady Fortune will turn away from a king who neglects his primary duty, that is securing the well-fare of the kingdom and its citizens. This logic will be fleshed out in detail in the speech of Hammīra's father Jaitrasiṃha in the eighth canto. We could also quote the earlier ominous words of another sleepy Chauhan king. On his deathbed king Prahlādana explains that the 'cause' of Royal Fortune is a triple set: valor, wisdom and prudence (*śauryaṃ buddhir aviśvāso rājyaśrī-kāraṇaṃ trayam*, 4.74). It ominously foreshadows the death of his son Vīranārāyaṇa, his reckless (*cāpalye,* 4.75) and gullible successor, who will get tricked into defeat by Jalaluddin (- historically speaking, the first Khalji ruler and uncle of Alauddin, Hammīra's enemy). It is for him that Prahlādana's wisdom on Royal Fortune is meant. The verse hints rather explicitly at the recurrent problem throughout the poem. The Chauhan heroes typically lack the mindful qualities, "wisdom" (*buddhi*) and "prudence" (*a-viśvāsa*, literally "non-trust"). Throughout HMK we are reminded of the important connection between the maintenance of Fortune and these 'wakeful' qualities, the kind of alertness, inner activeness and wisdom which allows one to deceive and see through deceit. Like the protagonists the reader too is put to the test of seeing through deceits, guises, ambiguities, detect suspicious silences, and appreciate the alluring effects of irony.

For example, the seemingly virtuous ruler Prahlādana falls victim due to his excessive desire to hunt, that dangerous royal activity, to which Nayacandra in one verse refers with the pejorative term *pāparddhiṃ*, "that which thrives on sin" (4.70). He dies, somewhat ironically, after killing a sleeping lion. This 'achievement' of killing a sleepy lion stirs up another lion who attacks the king from behind and fatally injures him (4.64-65). We get the impression that it is the king himself who is in a state of sleep. This is yet another variation of Pṛthvīrāja's triumph-turned-defeat story. Like in Pṛthvīrāja's story the whole hunting scene is described in highly ominous, 'tremulous' imagery. In 4.51 Prahlādana makes the earth shake (*vihvalayann*) with his marching soldiers, who are compared to "oceans, whirling at the end of time" (*samudrair iva kalpânta-bhrāntair*). He himself is described in 4.52 as "madly desirous of having fun" (*nṛpo 'bhūd rantum unmanāḥ*) after seeing the forest trees, as if they were beautiful women captivating his mind (*mano-harāḥ*). In 4.54 Some of his soldiers are described as "addicted to the hunting ground" (*ākheṭa-lampaṭāḥ*), "their feet transgressing the Bull (of virtue) like violent companions of Śiva" (*chivânugā raudrā vṛṣôllaṅghana-jāṅghikāḥ*). Such imagery of excess runs throughout the poem. As with the story of Pṛthvīrāja's dancing horse or Harirāja's dancing girls, we get the impression that Prahlādana is similarly putting all his energy into having fun (*rantum*) with the wrong woman.

Importantly, something happens to the heroic frame when reading all these stories. After Pṛthvīrāja's story it becomes harder for the reader to 'believe' in the clichés from the idealistic descriptions which each time enclose the more actualized, tragic story of their kingship. The tragic story is thus sandwiched between an introduction praising the king as the most virtuous ruler and a 'conclusion' telling that the king reached heaven.

How to make sense of such discrepancies? It is worth comparing this with what Narayana Rao, David Shulman and Sanjay Subrahmanyam have observed in their book *Textures of Time* (2001) about an early nineteenth-century historical *kāvya* narrating the tragic death of the Vijayanagaram king Vijaya Rama Raju against the British company. They explain how the poet-historian repeatedly juxtaposes an inflated heroic rhetoric with a more realist style where a tragic mode prevails, building up to "an incongruous conflation of levels" which make it seem that "the poet himself seems not to believe in his own heroic clichés; he purposely allows them to sound hollow and surreal."[38] In their analysis of this poem, the authors of *Textures of Time* suggest that the emptiness in content value does not mean that passages of inflated heroism and ideals do not serve a literary purpose within the dynamic flow of the narrative as a whole. They argue that they intensify the realistic narration, making it more striking or sharp: "[d]eliberate dissonance triggers a certain stark clairvoyance".[39] Johan Huizinga, in his wonderful *Herfstij der Middeleeuwen* ("Autumn of the Middle Ages", 1919), has observed something similar about the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century French chronicles composed by poet-historians in service of the French kings and the dukes of Burgundy. He explains how the authors of these texts start by proclaiming that they are about to praise the glorious deeds, bravery and martial feats of historical heroes.[40] But no one seems to hold on to this intent. The texts tend to transform into tales of greed, cruelty and wickedness, critically exposing the human obsession with fame, glory and power. Huizinga observes how some authors as it were occasionally pick up the heroic tone of their narrative, as if they had briefly forgotten their self-proclaimed chivalric intent to praise the glorious deeds of the historical actors.[41]

I would argue that in HMK a similar dissonance between idealistic and 'real' tragic registers similarly recurs, again and again, serving a similar, contrasting effect. For example, Pṛthvīrāja's brother Harirāja is thus first extravagantly praised in the conventional style of royal panegyric. We thus learn that in comparison to the illustrious whiteness of his fame everything else appears dark (3.78). His shining army subdues all

[38] Rao et al. 2001: 91.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Huizinga 1975 [1919]: 60.

[41] ibid.

his enemies during his conquest of the four directions (*digvijaya, 3.79-82*).[42] He is praised as a king who makes his own subjects prosper (4.1). But the subsequent tragic turn in the second verse of the fourth canto, announced by the marker "the other day" (*anyedyur*, 4.2), introduces the reader to the more real, less idealized, actualized story of his kingship. The shift is almost immediate. Harirāja is portrayed as a pleasure addict who doesn't care for his subjects. Moreover, he is cast as a fearful coward who jumps into the fire with his queens as soon as he sees Shahabuddin approaching, without putting up a fight (4.18-19) In this sense he is very much unlike Hammīra, the main protagonist of the poem, but perhaps very much like Pṛthvīrāja and Jayacandra in some accounts of the time.[43] Nevertheless, the overall, underlying logic and message remains the same. There is something wrong with their mind, with their way of thinking. Again, the general wisdom concluding Harirāja's story in 4.19 proves instructive for the overall message of the poem:

> Let the nature of men's future fame be like their mind.[44]

The idea is that Harirāja did not gain posthumous fame, because what he did – or what he thought - was not worthy of fame. Nayacandra seems to cast Harirāja as the scapegoat, taking over the blame of Pṛthvīrāja's legendary failure. It is after Harirāja "filled up the heavenly world" (*nākalokaṃ-pṛṇe*) and his retinue withered (*amlāsīt,* 4.20), that the Śaka king manages to take over the abandoned city of Ajmer (4.27). But Nayacandra's strategy to 'save' Pṛthvīrāja's name is clear, and perhaps even meant to be see-through. After the death of Harirāja, we suddenly learn that 'fortunately' Pṛthvīrāja had a grandson named Govindarāja, who was banished (from Ajmer?) by his father (4.24) and had established a kingdom in Ranthambhor. The verse is purposefully silent about how and why he was banished, and who his father was; perhaps another strategy to save Pṛthvīrāja's name?[45]

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[42] It is worth noting again that in one of these verses a famous image of Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa* is used, when describing Harirāja's army as a "marching torch" (*saṃcāriṇī dīpikā*, 3.79). The allusion is to *Raghuvaṃśa* 6.67 about Indumatī's "self-choice ceremony", where she is compared a marching torch-flame (*saṃcāriṇī dīpaśikhêva*). I thank Vidwan H.V. Nagaraja Rao for this reference.

[43] I discuss the stories about their traditional unheroic deaths in the chapter five, section 5.7. It is possible that Nayacandra's account of Harirāja's unheroic death had a base in historical memory at the time. Dasharatha Sharma (1975: 116) observes that in a contemporary Persian chronicle, the *Taju-l-Ma-Asir*, Harirāja's general Jaitra and probably his king too are said to have sacrificed themselves in the flames before the fort fell. It may also suggest that Persian and Sanskrit accounts borrowed from each other. Dirk Kolff (1990: 84) makes mention of a later Rajput oral epic connected to the Chauhan Harirāja, the *Bagaḍāvat Mahāgātha,* where the topic of *jauhar* and *satī* is central too.

[44] *bhāvinī yādṛśī kīrtir matiḥ syāt tādṛśī nṛṇām*

[45] Most sources say that Govindarāja was in fact Pṛthvīrāja's son, not his grandson. He is said to have been driven away from Ajmer by Harirāja, after the enemy had installed Pṛthvīrāja's son as the tributary

It can also be read as a comment or allusion to this tendency itself in historical poetry: poetic strategies to put a positive – but audible -spin on not so ideal episodes in the life of kings.[46] I will elaborate on this point in the next chapter, where I focus on the eighth canto. There HMK's parodic relation to the genre of historical biography (*carita*) becomes very – and almost humorously – clear. In any case, the mention of Govindarāja signals a brief restoration of Chauhan Fortune. In line with the recurrent imagery of the kingdom as a pond, Harirāja's former ministers portray Govindarāja as the goose (*haṃsa*) of the Chauhan dynasty:

> Attached to that king, the goose in the pool of our lord's dynasty,
> we become a vessel of fame and *may* remain free from fear.[47]

This verse too shows that Nayacandra is not really concerned with describing or praising the rise (*utpatti*) and 'purifying deeds' of the great Chauhan kings, as he put it in the prologue (1.26). Govindarāja is just a transitional character, marking the continuation of the Chauhan line in Ranthambhor. This is only a temporary restoration of Fortune, which again signals a somewhat dark hope. The ministers *may* remain free from fear. But we know that they won't.

2.4 Poetry's life-affirming power: the story of Vāgbhaṭa, "Warrior of Speech"

From the above discussion it might seem that Nayacandra presents a rather dark, and perhaps pessimistic vision of kingship. But pessimism or political cynicism may not be the right words to describe the tone and overall effect of the poem. I want to draw attention to the fascinating story of the minister-turned king Vāgbhaṭa, "The Warrior of (poetic) Speech" (*vāg-bhaṭa*). He is the only Chauhan 'king' who doesn't succumb to tragic blindness and successfully ends up establishing a stable reign. This man is the younger brother of the hunt-lover Prahlādana and minister to his reckless son Vīranārāyaṇa. His exceptional role in the poem is worthy of our attention. Nayacandra indeed took his time

king of Ajmer, see Sharma 1975: 115-6, who also explains how the Chauhans of Ranthambhor ruled as feudatories of the early Delhi Sultanate (p.119), that is until the resistance of Hammīra.

[46] As discussed in Bronner's reading (2010) of Bilhaṇa's *Vikramāṅkadevacarita.*

[47] sva-svāmi-vaṃśa-kāsāra-haṃsaṃ taṃ bhūpam āśritāḥ |
kīrti-pātrī-bhavanto 'vatiṣṭhemahy akuto-bhayāḥ ||4.25||

to tell the story of Vāgbhaṭa, the wise minister who is told by the foolish king Vīrānārāyaṇa – who is his nephew - to mind his own business (4.99, translated below), but ultimately saves the kingdom. He is introduced in 4.38 as Prahlādana's younger brother and chief minister, auspiciously described as "the vessel of wisdom, having Fortune herself as his wife" (*dvitīya-śrīr vāgbhaṭaḥ pratipad-ghaṭaḥ*, 4.38). And he leaves the poem almost hundred verses later when in verse 4.129, where he is described as the king who "happily ruled his kingdom for twelve years" (*sukhaṃ dvādaśa-varṣāṇi svayaṃ rājyaṃ sa tenivān*).

This precise temporal information makes his story different from his predecessors, perhaps indicative of the 'truthfulness' of Vāgbhaṭa's story. I do not mean truthfulness in an historical sense, even though his conflict with the ruler of Malwa, mentioned in 4.107, and his recapture of Ranthambhor does have an historical basis; he is even praised in a contemporary Persian chronicle.[48] What I mean is that in his story the enclosing heroic frame is not hollowed out by the actualization of his story. He is fittingly described as "the tree for the creeper of the Chauhan's Royal Fortune, which is about to fall" (*patiṣyac-cāhamānīya-rājya-śrī-vallī-pādapam,* 4.73). He is cast as the "warrior of insight/illumination" (*pratibhā-bhaṭaḥ,* 4.94) when in his role as a minister he tries to prevent the reckless king Vīranārāyaṇa from uniting with the enemy. He vainly tries to explain the real, secret meaning (*rahaḥ*) behind his enemy's deceitful message of flattery, with which Jalaluddin tricked the gullible Vīranārāyaṇa into defeat. When Vāgbhaṭa later manages to reconquer Ranthambhor he is described as the "master among those who know the science of policy" (*nīti-vidāṃ guruḥ,* 4.120). He indeed saves the kingdom by resorting to stratagem, instead of force, keeping his soldiers away from battle by encircling the fort and starving the enemy to death. The citizens are described as highly devoted to him, "who is endowed with the most praiseworthy splendor of victory" (*jaya-śasyatama-dyuteḥ*, 4.124). Unlike earlier and later in the poem, the brilliance of victory doesn't blind him. It doesn't make him overconfident and do stupid things.[49] He seems to truly understand the value of Śrī's playful charm (*vilāsa*), and therefore deserves the epithet of having her as his wife.[50]

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[48] As discussed by Sharma (1975: 121), noting how his conquest of Malwa is mentioned in the inscription of Balwan of 1288 CE. In the *Prabandhakośa* genealogy he is mentioned as "Conquerer of Malwa" (*mālavā-jetā*) (Jinavijaya 1935: 134), but no dates are given. Sharma mentions how the roughly contemporary Persian chronicle *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* (1260 CE) even praises him as "the greatest of the Rāis, and the most noble and illustrious of all the princes of Hindustan" (1975: 105). In the Sanskrit *Prabandhakośa* he is named Vāhaḍa(deva), and not Vāgbhaṭa.

[49] Like in HMK 10.68, discussed in chapter four, section 4.4.

[50] I believe Nayacandra purposefully employs the same imagery to refer to the playful charm (*vilāsa*) of Sarasvatī, as in 14.40, and that of Lakṣmī/Śrī, in 1.9. Given the game-like attitude that pervades the treatment of the narrative in each canto, and the poet's framing of his poetic project as true play, we might

The story of Vāgbhaṭa "Warrior of Speech" illustrates one of the poem's defining themes, namely that (political or poetic?) insight (*nīti, pratipad*, *pratibhā*) is the only successful means to secure Royal Fortune.[51] Speech (*vāc*) is typically synonymous with Sarasvatī, Goddess of poetic Speech. Similarly Vāgbhaṭa's later designation as the warrior of *pratibhā* "insight/brilliance", seems to allude to the significance of this term in Sanskrit poetics, where it is used to designate the poet's luminous 'genius' as one of the essential conditions to compose poetry (*kāvya*).[52] Let me try to illustrate how his exceptional role in the poem seems to reinforce the poem's meta-poetic undercurrent.

Vāgbhaṭa's role in the poem indeed resembles that of the poet's task as a visionary 'seer' and instructor to the king. His story is also suggestive of the characters' and reader's task to interpret texts, to see through poetry's deceitful guises, especially when it looks like royal flattery. But the childish and reckless Vīranārāyaṇa is not able to detect the 'real' message of the 'poems' sent to him. He succumbs to royal flattery, having his attention elsewhere, and acts in haste, without thinking. This contrasts dramatically with the thoughtful plan of Jalaluddin. We thus learn in 4.84 that this mighty Śaka king, whose manly efforts are 'mature' (*prauḍha-pauruṣaḥ*), realizes that he has to capture Vīranārāyaṇa with deceit (*chala-grāhyaṃ*). Then in the next verse, we learn that he conjures up a plan. Wishing to conquer him by trickery (*vijigīṣuś chalenâmuṃ*), he "lets some time pass"(*kiyaty atha gate kāle,* 4.85), and sends forth a messenger (*dūta*) (4.85).[53] The envoy's message is meant to flatter the Chauhan king. Using the conventional imagery of royal panegyric, Jalaluddin makes Vīranārāyaṇa believe that they make a good pair: through their alliance, like the Sun and the Moon, they will rule the whole earth together (4.86). Let me quote the two verses that follow

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make note of the following analogy between the poet's play and the royal game of fortune. Only through the grace of Sarasvatī – Goddess of speech – the poet is endowed with his creative power (*śakti*) to playfully deceive his readers, and disguise the "real message" for the attentive reader to uncover. Similarly, it is only through the energy of his playful consort, the goddess of Fortune, that a king can manage to employ deceit and see through deceit. Both the royal protagonists, poet and reader have to value and understand the playful/shining (*vi-lasat*) nature of poetry/fortune.

[51] This is also repeatedly emphasized in Jaitrasiṃha's lecture on kingship in the eighth canto (especially in 8.80-85).

[52] His name may also purposefully resonate with a Jain theoretician on poetry named Vāgbhaṭa, who is also quoted in the commentary *Hammīramahākāvya-dīpikā,* 151, 165. Edwin Gerow (1977: 278-9) notes that there are two Vāgbhaṭas, who are both associated with the school of Hemacandra, and his "Jaina emphasis on *pratibhā*." (p.279).

[53] Such details are important to understand how the poem repeatedly juxtaposes the more mature antagonists as patient 'masters of time' against the Chauhan tendency to act recklessly (like children). Taking time is what allows Jalaluddin to trick the Chauhans into defeat. Hammīra's wise brother Bhoja – who will abandon the Chauhan king - and Alauddin's brother-general Ulugh Khan exert a similar control of time. I discuss their role in chapter four, in sections 4.3 and 4.4.

Because it is the union of our mutual affection that leads to the ripening of our fruit,
not indeed the outburst of conflict, which is brittle like the game of happiness.[54]
Having obtained an ally with someone like you, like fire uniting with wind
I will instantly burn down the dynasties of my enemies, however strong they are.[55]
I'm delighted by your bravery! You are my brother!
if henceforth I would betray you then, for sure, I will curse the Creator.[56]
But you should come over for a meeting one time!
And if not, I, for the same purpose, will subject myself to your command.[57]

The reader of course knows that all this is a scam. The message itself is indeed also somewhat see-through. (And Vāgbhaṭa will try to point this out to the king.) Note how the flattering tone switches from a flattering 'we perspective' in 4.87 to a more violent 'I-perspective' in 4.88: "I will burn down the dynasties of my enemies". Nayacandra again purposefully exploits the irony by describing in the next verse that the Chauhan king, was driven by a desire for 'war' (*vigraha*) with someone else. The verse thus says that he was "taken in" (*vigṛhīta*) by his conflicts (*vigrahaiḥ*) with a ruler named Vigraha, "War", the ruler of the city Vakṣaḥ-sthala, whom he desires to overpower easily (*sutarām sisādhayiṣato*).[58] Jalaluddin's message, which talks about the futility of war (*vigraha,* 4.88) to seduce him to 'unite in peace', ironically highlights that the Chauhan king is in fact entirely caught up in war (*vigraha*). This is presented as the reason why he falls into the trap. We thus learn that the Chauhan king is kissed or 'touched' (*cumbitaṃ*) by the Śaka's flattering message:

Kissed by the deviously roundabout
speech of the messenger
like a lotus by bumble bees
the heart of the Chauhan

[54] tan nau yuktā mithaḥ prītiḥ pacelima-phalôdayā |
na tu vigraha-visphūrtir saukhya-keli-bhidelimā ||4.87||
I take the Koṭā manuscript variant here, instead of *na ca* and *bhidelima-tamāyatiḥ*. The compound *saukhya-keli* fits well with HMK's recurrent concern to turn everything into a game (*keli*).

[55] sahāyaṃ tvādṛśaṃ labdhvā samīram iva pāvakaḥ |
dandahye yat kṣaṇenâiva vairi-vaṃśān dṛḍhān api ||4.88||

[56] prīto 'smi tava śauryeṇa tvaṃ me bhrātā 'sy ataḥ param |
druhyāmi yady ahaṃ tubhyaṃ kartre tarhi śape dhruvam ||4.89||

[57] eka-velaṃ sametavyaṃ milanāya paraṃ tvayā |
na ced ahaṃ samākāryas tvad-ādeśa-vaśaṃ-vadaḥ ||4.90||

[58] Sharma (1975: 119) asks in his notes whether this Vigraha is the (Pratihāra) king Vigraha, the father of Malayavarman of Gopagiri. I believe the name is meant to be fictional.

was inspired with trust.[59]

Kissed (*cumbita*) by deceitful flattery, the Chauhan king is about to rush headlong towards his death. It is in this verse, about Vīranārāyaṇa's misplaced trust (*vyaśvasīt*), that his father's ominous advice about the triple set needed to maintain Royal Fortune– bravery, intelligence, and prudence (*a-viśvāsa*) – comes to fruition. It ironically illustrates how 'bravery' (*śaurya*) is meaningless without the cleverness of deceit. 'The heart of the Chauhan' (*cāhamānasya hṛdayaṃ*) is not sensitive enough to see through the deceitful flattery of his enemy. The enemy, by praising Vīranārāyaṇa's valor (*śaurya*) in 4.89 cleverly makes use of the royal (or human) susceptibility to praise and flattery. The deceptive 'bend' (*bhaṅgī*) of the words is indicative of the curved, roundabout, indirect way of speaking. But the word *bhaṅgībhir* also literally and audibly– like in Pṛthvīrāja's story (*bhaṅgyā,* 3.46, or even in the *bhaktir* of 1.7 – all placed as the last word of the first pāda – and later in canto) – signals another dangerous rupture in the Chauhan dynasty's waning flow of Splendor (Śrī).

Importantly, the reckless, war-obsessed Chauhan king is still given an opportunity to bridge this gap. (Hammīra will be given several occasions to prevent the tragedy from further unfolding). He only has to listen to the wise speech of Vāgbhaṭa, the 'Warrior of (poetic) Illumination' (*pratibhā-bhaṭaḥ,* 4.93).

Then, Vāgbhaṭa, that warrior of illumination, after seeing the king,
restlessly desiring to unite with the Śaka, told the secret truth (*rahaḥ*).[60]

He reminds the king to turn his mind (*buddheḥ*) to the wisdom of policy (*naya-śāstrām*) and not fall into the trap by uniting with the "bad-hearted barbarian" (*duṣṭa-hṛn-mleccha*) (4.94). But the episode clearly invites us to consider who is truly 'bad-hearted'. Interestingly, the 'truth-revealing' speech of Vāgbhaṭa is presented in the same poetic imagery as the truth-disguising and flattering speech of the enemy's messenger:

If you want to rule the kingdom and live for a long time,
Then you should bring my bee-like speech to your lotus-like heart.[61]

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[59] tābhir dūtôkti-bhaṅgībhir bhṛṅgībhir iva vārijam |
cumbitaṃ cāhamānasya hṛdayaṃ vyaśvasīttamām || 4.92|

[60] tato 'vanīpatiṃ vīkṣya śaka-saṅga-manôtsukam
rahaḥ saṃvādayām āsa vāgbhaṭaḥ pratibhā-bhaṭaḥ ||4.93||

[61] pracikīrṣasi ced rājyaṃ jijīviṣasi cec ciram |
tadā mad-ukti-bhṛṅgîyaṃ nīyatāṃ hṛdayâmbujam ||4.96 ||

I believe this message is of some importance. I want to suggest that Vāgbhaṭa is an advocate of a fortune- and life-affirming perspective. Importantly, he shares this concern with the citizens of the kingdom. Throughout the poem this life-affirming perspective entails a radical opposition to the de facto selfish warrior perspective which glorifies war and death. Warriors are blinded by pride, desire for fame, martial lust, the reward of heaven, and are as it were "disgusted" (*nirvinna*) with life.[62] Let me show what happens next.

> Thus he (Vāgbhaṭa) had spoken. And there, in silence, blinding anger pervaded the king's body,
> making his eyebrows take a terrifying (*bhīmāṃ*) curve as he answered:
> "Whether an improper or proper act, I will do what pleases me the most
> according to my own will. Mind your own business (*kṛtam*)!"
> As it were by a spear, these words struck Vāgbhaṭa in his heart.
> He therefore left the kingdom, and went with his retinue to Malwa.[63]

Contrary to the deceitful flattery of his enemy, Vāgbhaṭa's (poetic) bee-like speech does not please the king. His subsequent insults pierce his minister-uncle-poet Vāgbhaṭa in the heart, making him leave for Malwa (where another court intrigue awaits him). The Chauhan king's blind anger (*krudhândhalaḥ*, 4.98) is connected to a delusional arrogance or pride. In the next verse (4.101) we learn that he goes to the enemy *out of pride* (*garvāt*), not only ignoring or literally 'overlooking' (*upekṣya*) Vāgbhaṭa's message, but "also - or *even* -the words of the citizens, who were shining with supreme love" (*parama-prīti-gaurāṇāṃ paurāṇām **api** bhāṣitam*). The imagery of seeing and light is used effectively and with a wry sense of irony to highlight the king's blindness. The next verse shows how the Śaka king (*śakêndra*) leads the king 'with great light' (*mahena mahatā*) into the inner chambers (4.102), where he is further kissed (*cumbitam*) by flattering speech (4.103), and ultimately gets poisoned (4.104).

> The other day the Śaka had the king killed by means of poison.
> Oh! Do sinful people, when doing bad acts, ever err? [64]

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[62] This view is made explicit in 13.208. And the warrior's strong sense of egoism (*ahaṅ-kāra*), which exerts supervision (*adhyakṣa*) in 13.197.

[63] ity uktvā tatra tūṣṇīke sarvâṅgīṇa-krudhândhalaḥ |
ghaṭayan bhrakuṭīṃ bhīmāṃ pārthivo jagivān iti ||4.98||
akāryaṃ yadi vā kāryaṃ yan me rocisyatetamām |
kariṣye tad ahaṃ svairaṃ cintayâtra kṛtaṃ tava ||4.99||
vāgbhaṭas tena vākyena prāsenêva hato hṛdi |
yayau tad rājyam utsṛjya mālave sa-paricchadaḥ ||4.100||

[64] anyedyur viṣa-yogena śako bhūpam amīmarat |
kvā 'py akṛtyaṃ prakurvantaḥ pāpā muhyanti hanti kim ||4.104||

On the surface, this rhetorical question may read as a critique of the 'sinful' Jalaluddin and his act of trickery – or perhaps through his *control* of the poison (*viṣa-yogena*), like Śiva who swallowed the poison called "trick of time" (*kāla-kūṭa*). Although this interpretation may seem far-fetched, this rhetorical question is later modified in Hammīra's story. Thus, this is what we learn when Alauddin, the Trickster (*māyāvī,* 13.71), manages to win over Hammīra's favorite general Ratipāla "Protector of Pleasure" (13.72):

> And he charmed him, deceitfully, with various honors and gifts.
> Do those who live by trickery ever err in their tricks?[65]

It is quite significant that in this modified version Alauddin's deceit (*kūṭa)* is not linked to *pāpa,* or "sin" as in the story of Jalaluddin's trickery. It is presented as the creative mastery of time or fate itself, like Śiva or Viṣṇu, the divine Trickster (*māyāvin*). This, I believe, is implicit in all the victory stories throughout HMK.[66] Moreover, the skill to deceive and see through deceit is a sign of wakefulness, a quality that attracts Śrī. It is a sign of knowing how the game of Fortune works. Both 'general truths' point to the fact that the Chauhan heroes always get tricked into defeat, become sleepy or deluded (*mūḍha*), unlike the clever antagonists, who never seem to err in their trickery (*muhyanti*). In the first case - more than in the conclusion to Pṛthvīrāja's story -we are clearly asked to consider who is really engaging in inappropriate acts (*akṛtya*) – the reckless Chauhan king or the clever Śaka king. Who therefore really deserves the label of sinful (*pāpa*)? Who is the real villain? And who is really blind and sleepy? Of course, Nayacandra never gives explicit answers. Many of the general truths (*arthântara-nyāsa*) are formulated as ambiguous, open ended questions. Often these questions blur the moral distinction between protagonist and antagonist. This is in tune with the all-important ambiguous introductory question of 1.9 – the thematic seed (*bīja*) of the poem - about Hammīra's potentially problematic relation to the playful charms of his symbolic wife Royal Fortune (*rājya-śriyo vilāsās*).

Vāgbhaṭa's story is clearly indicative of the poem's meta-poetic concern. Like the Chauhan king, the reader is invited (or urged) to see through the guise of the panegyric mode which praises heroic virility (*śaurya, vikrama*). The heroic frame tends to lose its grip

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I take the Koṭa manuscript variant *śakobhūpam* instead of *śakān nṛpam*, and *hanti,* instead of *hanta.*

[65] arañjayac ca kūṭeṇa mānair dānair anekadhā|
kūṭôpajīvinaḥ kiṃ vā kūṭe muhyanti kutracit||13.72||

[66] Something similar has been noted by Satya Vrat (2003: 171), who observes that "Alauddin had a marvelous sense of time", in contrast to "short-sighted as well as short-tempered" behavior of Hammīra. Yet, in his earlier work (Vrat 1994: 151) he concludes that Hammīra emerges "as a brave and, in a restricted sense, an idealistic king but, like most Rajput rulers of mediaval [sic] history, he suffered from an appalling lack of political sagacity."

on the Chauhan heroes, whose hearts are touched or kissed (*cumbita*) by the wrong kind of words or ideas. We are constantly confronted with the problem that the true warriors of the poem lack the insight to both see through deceit and employ deceit. Somewhat ironically indeed the heroes of the poem are more than once described as devotees of the *nirvyāja-vīra-vratam*, the "true hero's vow", or literally the hero's vow which is free or not dependent on deceit (*nir-vyāja*).[67] The poem only praises this vow on the surface, or somewhat sarcastically as through Jalaluddin's deceiving flattery. Throughout the poem the warrior-code is presented as a blinding obsession with – a being 'caught in by' (*vigṛhīta*) - (unnecessary) violence and war (*vigraha*).

The overall poetic effect of Vāgbhaṭa's story resembles that of the earlier idealistic descriptions. Vāgbhaṭa's illuminous ideal, his exceptional story of success, makes the tragedy of his predecessors and the ensuing tragedy of Hammīra come out sharper, more intense. After all, we know that unlike Vāgbhaṭa his grandson Hammīra will not be able to prevent the kingdom's Royal Splendor from falling, drying up, waning.

2.5 Conclusion

The cantos about Hammīra's predecessors are clearly concerned with modelling a tragic pattern of kingship. The decline of Chauhan fortune is powerfully inaugurated through the story of Pṛthvīrāja's 'dancing horse' *Nāṭârambhā*, which he was unable to control. Or alternately, it started with Shahabuddin's skillful deceit, namely with *his* control over this prancing mare, allowing him to stretch out the sleepy 'Earth' in his own hand or bed, as we saw in the tragic turn to the third canto (3.1).

From a thematic perspective, we could say that in the first four cantos everything is already said or introduced: the fatal condition of sleepiness or blindness underlying the tragic change from fortune to misfortune, the ironic reversal accompanying a triumph-turned-defeat story, the ineffectiveness of the chivalric code, the reckless attitude of the king and his misbehavior towards wise ministers/poets, etc. Everything that has happened, will happen again during Hammīra's kingship. Thus, the framing of Pṛthvīrāja's story – with the pretext of war involving the protection of refugees – purposefully evokes the traditional pretext of the Hammīra legend.[68] Similarly, the story

[67] As in the last verse of canto one, 1.104, the penultimate verse of canto seven, .7.127, at the end of the poem in 14.19.

[68] Interestingly, Nayacandra will deliberately downplay this traditional element in his version of Hammīra's story, see chapter five.

of Vāgbhaṭa, who reconquers Ranthambhor by deceitfully encircling the fort and starving the enemy to death, is clearly meant to evoke the traditional outcome of the Hammīra story. This may already be suggestive of the inevitable inversion. Indeed, Vāgbhaṭa's 'ideal' kingship – he is the master of good governance (*nīti*) - cannot foreshadow Hammīra's rule. Interestingly, his story will resonate in that of Alauddin's brother and general Ulugh Khan, who similarly explains to the more virile general Nusrat Khan – who will die - that experts on good policy "do not praise valor" (*na vikramaṃ nīti-vidaḥ stuvanti*, 11.21).

The recurrent pattern is that all the Chauhan heroes fall victim to states of confusion or delusion (*moha*). It makes them easy victims for the more clever antagonists who trick them into defeat. In the 'heroic' life stories of these kings- which may be more narratives of death (and time, *kāla,* synonymous with death) - the themes of delusion, misperception, fortune, fate and fame are ever present. The reader is invited to explore how they relate to each other.

For now, I will leave in the middle how this problem of ignorance/delusion relates to questions of morality. Nayacandra deliberately complicates matters relating to right or wrong acts, of responsibility or accountability. To understand the poem's guiding ideas, it can be useful to pay attention to the many general wisdoms about human nature (*arthântara-nyāsa*) which tend to conclude the many critical episodes in the poem. Although they are typically meant to say something about the preceding episode, these insights continue to resonate throughout the poem. Moreover, in many cases they seem applicable to both protagonist and antagonist.

In addition to the blurring of moral boundaries between good and evil, we have to be attentive to the widening discrepancies between idealistic preludes and postludes enclosing the actualized, real and tragic story of kingship. In the case of Hammīra's story this discrepancy ironically hollows out the lamentations in the final canto. The concluding lamentation thus hyperbolically deplores the death of a beloved ruler, who is not really portrayed as such, at least in Nayacandra's account. In short, the enclosing idealistic descriptions – with the typical imagery of the king's unsurpassed brilliance – seem to make the ensuing tragic story come out even more sharp and dark.[69]

I will later suggest that Nayacandra's patterning of Chauhan history confronts the '*eka*-perspective' with which Nayacandra introduced the topic of his poem: Hammīra doesn't stand out as the 'only one' (*eka*) worthy of praise in the *kaliyuga*; nor will he emerge from this history as the true gem heading the Chauhan dynasty. Quite the contrary, I believe,

[69] This discrepancy frames HMK as a whole, which is indeed sandwiched between an idealistic introduction in the first canto and a somewhat curious lamentation in the fourteenth canto, put in the mouth of 'wise men' who deplored Hammīra's death in a *kāvya-paramparā*, a tradition of poems. I will argue in chapter three at length how this discrepancy deliberately invites the reader to rethink the heroic stature and fame bestowed upon them by the people, poets, story tellers, bards, etc.

Nayacandra presents him as the embodiment, or the ultimate culmination of the tragic, deeply flawed kingship *of* the present degenerate time period. All the tragic elements in the histories of his predecessors, divided over several rulers, will come together in the story of the last Chauhan king.

In the next chapter I reflect on how the constant re-enactment of each episode – sometimes through inversion - might have to do with Nayacandra's vision on temporality, or of making the course and pulsation of time *felt*, as David Shulman brilliantly showed to be the case in Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa*.[70] In HMK too the (hi)stories of individual kings constantly re-enact themselves, their triumph-turned-defeat logic, particular turns of phrases and imagery. Each new story seems to rhyme with the past (and with the stories from important intertexts), and with the poet's own present, as I show in chapter five.[71] And because of the persistent repetition, we are constantly aware that the present will continue to model the tragic patterns of the future. Hammīra will not be able to change the tragic course of the Chauhan dynasty. With the gradual waning of Fortune's brilliance – who after the eighth canto almost literally disappears from Hammīra's sight – the rhythmic pulsation of the Chauhan dynasty gradually slows down. Some verses clearly attempt to make this tragic temporality felt as a carefully crafted auditive experience. A concern with Time (*kāla*) not only thematically structures the poet's composition as a whole but is making itself felt, as poetry does, by making the reader experience what is thematically said, by making it come alive.[72]

[70] Shulman 2014.

[71] In section 5.2 I speculate on how Nayacandra is playing a 'mirror-game' with his political present, including nods to his patron Vīrama Tomar.

[72] Nayacandra self-consciously reflects on this capacity of poetry, as in the conclusion of the erotic seventh canto (7.128). Or as in 13.25, where the dance of the courtesan Dhārādevī's is so beautiful that it "makes the feeling of life come alive" (*jīvābhāvam ajījivat*). And more generally, at the end of the poem, where it is said that Nayacandra's poetry brings alive the poets from the past, as discussed in the conclusion to this dissertation.

Chapter 3 Time's tricky moves

3.1 Poetry's waking power: "good mornings" (*suprabhātam*) with a twist

This chapter attempts to give insight into HMK's concern with modelling a certain vision of time. I will do this through a close reading of the crucial eighth canto. It is one of those cantos that is dismissed in Kirtane's influential paraphrase of Nayacandra's epic, for not containing 'historical information.' Thematically speaking however this canto is of pivotal significance. It is in this canto that Hammīra obtains Royal Fortune. It therefore signals the tragic point of no return in the tragic decline of the Chauhan's fortune. I hope to demonstrate how Hammīra's obtainment of Royal Fortune is subtly presented as the result of Jaitrasiṃha tragic and stubborn choice to entrust his symbolic wife to the *wrong* son. This choice is inspired by a dream-vision in which the god Viṣṇu tells Jaitrasiṃha to give the kingdom to Hammīra, and not to his older brother. I will explain how this episode reads as another playful nod to the tradition of patron-centered poetry, to which Nayacandra's epic displays a somewhat parodic, inversive relationship. Jaitrasiṃha's tragic choice itself, however, is fully in line with the recurrent, structuring theme of mental sleepiness or blindness, which haunts all the main Chauhan characters throughout the poem. Meta-poetic concerns too reach new heights in this canto. The whole canto is thus purposefully sandwiched between two episodes in which the royal court poet must *intervene* to wake up the Chauhans.

Let me start this discussion on HMK's temporal vision by recalling that Nayacandra deliberately started his poem with framing Hammīra's story within the cycle of successive eons (*yuga*). Time, in this framework, is said to follow a degenerative and play-logic, in line with the declining numbers of the dice in a gambling match. Hammīra, then is presented -somewhat ambiguously – as the model of kingship in the *kaliyuga,* the only luminous ideal worthy of praise in the present dark age of moral decay. As such, Hammīra is also presented as the brilliant 'end point' of a long history of Chauhan rule, going back to the very beginning of a time cycle. This beginning is introduced in 1.14, right after the

prologue, when Brahmā, the Creator god, was said to roam around (*bhṛmataḥ*) the earth to perform a sacrifice and found an auspicious place in Pushkar (1.14).[1] The poem gradually takes us from the more mythological past to the remembered histories of kings like Pṛthvīrāja, in the process adding more historical detail to finally arrive at Hammīra's kingship in the eighth canto and his death in the penultimate thirteenth canto.[2] As I show in the next chapter, the highly dramatic second half of this canto is purposefully presented as two long, *sleepless* days, in which an exhausted, sleepless king makes several fatal decisions that eventually culminate in his death and the destruction of his clan. The first part of the last and fourteenth canto somewhat ironically deplores Hammīra's death, and the widowhood of Lakṣmī (14.2), on the Chauhan side.

In short, thematically speaking the whole poem, between verse 1.14 and 14.21, can be read as an epic about the rise and especially about the fall of the Chauhan dynasty. This is metaphorically expressed as a gradual process of falling asleep (losing consciousness), drying up (losing vital 'juice'), waning (losing shine). This degenerative process took off in verse 3.1 with the tragic shift in or of Pṛthvīrāja's story. All this has clearly something to do with Time, the supposedly dark force enabling such transformations. In the eighth canto Nayacandra speaks about how Time (*kāla*) roams around (*bhramati,* 8.128) in this world, invisibly, moving back and forth, to take away the lives of people. And evidently, Time is doing precisely this in Nayacandra's poetic world.[3]

However, there's a larger, overarching temporal frame and meta-poetic undercurrent, confronting the tragic temporal logic itself. Thus, enclosing this tragic decline of the Chauhan's Fortune (*śrī*), we have the thematic and meta-poetic frame of Śrī as a playful and discriminating Splendor (1.1), who is *always* (*sadā*) there, enjoying herself somewhere and with someone (*raṃramīti*). As Lakṣmī she will choose to remain with the most virtuous and playful royal husband, the one who is most active and aware. And as Sarasvatī this active principle is always there to bestow her brilliance on the creative and playful poet (1.7). Unlike the worship of Hindu gods or Jain ford-makers, the power of Sarasvatī's purifying flow – and true play (*nālīka-līlā*) in the commentator's reading - may truly provide the fording place (*tīrtha*) to reach fortune, awareness and joy. It is certainly not a

[1] The commentary makes explicit that *ādau* means *yugādau* or *kalpādau*, "at the beginning of a *yuga* or *kalpa*".

[2] Worthy of note is that Hammīra's history is enclosed by the mention of two precise dates (the only ones in the poem) in 8.56 – VS 1339 (CE 1283, verse 8.56), in which Hammīra obtained sovereignty – and in 13.196 – which doesn't mention a year, but only that Hammīra prepared for the final battle on Sunday, the sixth day in the bright half of the month Śrāvaṇa.

[3] A swinging or whirling back-and-forth movement is connoted by the verbal root *bhram*, especially when prefixed with vi. I will suggest in the conclusion that it might not be a coincidence that the final word of the poem, *vibhrama* (14.46), makes a point about a 'confusing' back-and-forth movement as a major poetic effect of Nayacandra's poetry.

coincidence that HMK concludes with a verse (14.46) about how his poetry produces the liquid ambrosia (*amṛta*) and generates an experience of *vibhrama*, a confusing, though pleasurable back-and forth movement. This is unlike the Creator god Brahmā, who is also said to roam around (*bhṛmataḥ,* 1.14) in this world, but who never grants anyone the boon of immortality. He is indeed typically cursed by the people for the creation of purposeless suffering and cruelty. However, this process of blaming the tragic appearance of time (or fate, or fortune), may be a sign of sleepiness and delusion. I want to suggest that the eighth canto can be read as a replication of HMK's overarching temporal and meta-poetic frame, about poetry's potential to activate the eternally present principle of Śrī.[4]

The eighth canto can be read as a 'pause' in Nayacandra's epic, where some thematic principles become fleshed out before the story of Hammīra's tragedy takes off (canto 9-13). But it also contains yet another story about the dangerous transfer of Fortune from father to son. Although the canto is titled "description of Śrī Hammīradeva's obtainment of the kingdom" (*śrī-hammīradeva-rājyâpti-varṇano*) we could read it as the description of Jaitrasiṃha's tragedy. It thus introduces another dangerous temporal interval or gap, to borrow a term used by Shulman in his discussion of how Kālidāsa models temporality in *Raghuvaṃśa*.[5] Within HMK as a whole this canto marks both an ending and a beginning, functioning both as a retrospective analysis of Hammīra's pre-history, and a prediction of the upcoming darkness when Hammīra takes over the burden of kingship. It reads both as flash-back and flash-forward, making it appear as though the distinction between past-present-future collapses. This is not unlike the ominous stories of Hammīra's predecessors. The difference is that Nayacandra's concern with temporality becomes more explicit. Quite fittingly the canto concludes with several verses on Time (8.127-129), making explicit, for example, how this all-pervasive force operates through the creative and deceitful power of *māyā*, Illusion, and her playful gestures of delusion (*moha-lalitaiḥ*). (These verses will be discussed in the final section of this chapter.) This is the only time in the poem where Hammīra – and the reader – is *explicitly* urged to wake up from Time's deceit (8.128). Indeed, the progress of Time seems to have a numbing effect on the senses of the Chauhans. Fortunately, there is the power of poetry, which *may* have a wakening effect, at least for those who listen attentively. Unfortunately, both Jaitrasiṃha and his son Hammīra won't emerge from Nayacandra's poem as good listeners.

I hope to demonstrate that Nayacandra plays with the employment of the literary device of the *suprabhātam* "good-morning poetry", partly as an engagement with earlier textual models, like Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa*. In order to make this point, I will first briefly

[4] In addition, Jaitrasiṃha's delusional dream-vision in this canto, may resonate in Nayacandra's statement at the end of his poem, where he explains that he was nudged by Hammīra himself in a dream to retell his life story. I discuss this verse in section 5.4 "Nayacandra's dream-vision" in chapter five.

[5] Shulman 2014: 40-44.

recapitulate how David Shulman discusses the meta-poetic rationale behind the *suprabhātam* in *kāvya* literature.[6] In Kālidāsa's poem Raghu's son Aja has fallen asleep before attending the *svayaṃ-vara* "self-choice" ceremony of princess Indumatī. At this ceremony Indumatī– who symbolizes Śrī - has to choose the most virtuous husband among a number of competitors. Aja has to wake up and attend this ceremony. Fortunately for Aja, and the continuation of the Raghu dynasty, the royal bards manage to wake up the sleepy prince. Shulman emphasizes how the *suprabhātam* is not merely describing the process of waking from sleep but is meant to *effect* this transition. And the verses do this by inserting "slight stings", that are meant "to jibe" at Prince Aja, "to shame" him into waking.[7] The royal poets make Aja abandon his mistress Sleep and direct his attention to his proper lover: Regal Splendor (*rājya-śrī*). The bard's intervention thus secures Indumatī' choice or love for Aja *and* the continuation of the Raghu line. Shulman suggests that the bard's verses can be understood as an "expansive movement" across dangerous, temporal gaps which repeatedly open in the poem, threatening the continuation of the Raghu line.[8] The poetic intervention of the bard helps the Raghu dynasty overcome this gap and restore Śrī's natural brilliance. Importantly, although these gaps tend to get wider and more dangerous, the heroes from the Raghu dynasty each time manage to cross over them.

Most interestingly, Shulman explains how in Kālidāsa's poetry the dangerous temporal gaps or empty spaces that open up through episodes of sleepiness, rupture, forgetting, etc., figure as "mode[s] for incipient fullness".[9] They are necessary conditions for wakefulness, restoration, a deeper remembering, etc. Ultimately, *Raghuvaṃśa* is thus concerned with modelling time as a regenerative force. Shulman suggest that this dynamic also applies to *Raghuvaṃśa*'s problematic 'tragic ending'. The poem thus ends with the death of king Agnivarṇa, who wasted away because of his pleasure-addiction. Even though the Raghu line seems beyond restoration – Agnivarṇa is dead and has no sons -, the concluding verse indicates that the Raghu dynasty will restore itself: the queen is pregnant. Shulman explains the poem's concern with regeneration as follows:

> In general, the richness or fullness that is drained away or expended (...), by whatever twists or turns of royal fortune will be restored out of the very emptiness it leaves behind.[10]

And regarding the meta-poetic intervention of the *suprabhātam*:

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[6] Shulman 2014: 48-61.

[7] Ibid. p 50, 59.

[8] Ibid. p53.

[9] Shulman 2014: 37.

[10] Ibid. 39

> The more general pattern of emptying and filling thus assumes a new form in the potential space between sleeping and waking, a space naturally aligned with poetry and poetic visions.[11]

A crucial difference with *Raghuvaṃśa* is that in HMK the dangerous, temporal gaps– which similarly open up in various modes - will widen to an uncrossable extreme. Drawing on Kālidāsa's own imagery Shulman refers to these temporal gaps or spaces of emptiness as the '*antara*' (interval) position. In the *suprabhātam* in the thirteenth canto, Nayacandra too uses this word (13.144) to announce the threatening interval in which the sleepless Hammīra, in the moment of twilight, goes through a delusional stream of thoughts. In HMK these gaps are also presented as a "potential spaces". However, Nayacandra presents this middle moment as a moment of fatal confusion, at least for the characters themselves.[12] In Nayacandra's verses the *suprabhātam* doesn't have the intended effect of generating a real transition from sleep to waking, and thus secure a safe transfer of Fortune from father to son.

HMK, indeed, is much more tragic. The *suprabhātam* signals a point in the narrative where the Chauhans will *no longer* manage to cross over the threatening gap or rupture, opening up with the transfer of Fortune from father to son. In the fourth canto such ruptures also opened and were miraculously crossed or fixed. Thus, after the death of Pṛthvīrāja and Harirāja we learned how the banished prince Govindarāja had secured the continuation of the Chauhan line in Ranthambhor. Similarly, the wise minister-turned-king Vāgbhaṭa managed to restore the Chauhan's brilliance, which was about to fall after kingship was bestowed upon his reckless nephew Vīranārāyaṇa. In the eighth canto the problem of dynastic succession is re-introduced. Although it seems that the *suprabhātam* is meant to awaken prince Hammīra before his coronation, in effect it may read as a wake-up call for Vāgbhaṭa's son Jaitrasiṃha, Hammīra's father, who is about to give Royal Fortune to the middle son, Hammīra, and not to his elder brother Suratrāṇa. Interestingly, the canto culminates in yet another set of *suprabhātam*-like verses – about time/death (*kāla*) – meant to wake up king Hammīra *after* his coronation. This time not from sleep, but from a delusional sorrow and the accompanying (delusional) idea about the horror of Fate (as the Creator god) whom Hammīra holds responsible for the 'unexpected' death of his father, and everything else that is bad in this world. The eighth canto is thus sandwiched between two significant meta-poetic interventions, poems within the poem that urge us – the reader and characters – to wake up from delusional perceptions. However, unfortunately– quite literally indeed – these verses do not manage

[11] Ibid. 49.

[12] Recall how Pṛthvīrāja too was caught in the confusion and turmoil during the enemy's attack taking place at twilight, as discussed in chapter two (2.2 "Falling asleep").

to bring the intended awakening for the Chauhan characters. By handing over the throne to Hammīra Jaitrasiṃha falls into the dark temporal gap. Everyone but Jaitrasiṃha knows this, his ministers, the reader, and even his son Hammīra himself.

3.2 Shaking heads at dawn: Jaitrasiṃha's confusion

To understand the problem of Jaitrasiṃha's delusion, we need to return briefly to the end of the fourth canto, where Nayacandra subtly anticipates Hammīra's problematic entrance into kingship. Here the poem first purposefully reenacts the situation of Pṛthvīrāja's birth story, the 'promising' offspring of king Someśvara and his wife Karpūradevī (in canto two), who ultimately failed to fulfill his promise to ensure the well-fare of the kingdom. In a similar fashion Hammīra is now praised as the ideal son of Jaitrasiṃha and his wife Hirādevī. The praise for Hammīra thickens to the point that we learn that his father made his son marry seven beautiful girls, "with whom he played all the time, free from shame, like Indra – the 'Unshakable' - with his wives" (*cikrīḍa tābhiḥ saha śaśvad asta-vrīḍaṃ yathā duś-cyavanaḥ śacībhiḥ*, 4.158). Throughout the poem such verses typically signal a reversal.[13] Hammīra has the firmness and sex appeal of Indra, referred to as the one who is 'difficult to shake' (*duś-cyavanaḥ*). Ostensibly, the information about Hammīra's divine sex drive is meant to make the transition to the next three erotic cantos (5-6-7). These are wholly devoted to describing the various delights of amorous play and love making. The erotic play goes on until the bards in the eighth canto announce the break of dawn with their *suprabhātam*, the topic of this section.

However, the transition to these erotic cantos doesn't proceed that smoothly. Nayacandra purposefully breaks the ideal image by telling in the next verse (4.159) that Hammīra had two other brothers, an older one (*pitrya*) called Suratrāṇa, "Sultan", and a younger one (*anuja*) called Vīrama (- perhaps a nod to Nayacandra's presumed patron Vīrama Tomar – see my discussion in chapter five, 5.2). This extra information may be somewhat disturbing for it implies that Hammīra is not the rightful heir to the throne. Moreover, the verse describes the elder brother, "Sultan" or "Protector of the Gods" (*sura-trāṇa*) as the "spring to the blooming vine, which is the rise of *naya*" (*nayôdaya-dalad-vallī-vasantaḥ*). Thus, like his grandfather Vāgbhaṭa, this Suratrāṇa is introduced as an expert

[13] Later in the poem, in the ninth canto, the triumphant part culminates in a similar – and illusory – ideal. This happens similarly after the praise for Hammīra thickens to an extreme, in three verses where he is compared with the gods. Here too, the chosen epithets, are used purposefully to signal a reversal. See the discussion in the next chapter, section 4.2.

in *naya,* good policy and conduct. He would make a good successor. For the attentive reader this clearly adds to the tragic load of Jaitrasiṃha's choice to bestow kingship on the middle son, Hammīra. Like his predecessor Vīranārāyaṇa, Hammīra will turn out to have a well-pronounced dislike for *naya/nīti,* the worldly wisdom of politics and good conduct.

Such verses, which subtly break the ideal, can be understood as 'wake-up' calls, just like our poet dropped the word 'sleepiness' (*śayālutām*) when glorifying Pṛthvīrāja's kingship right before the turn to the tragic third canto. They are part of the poet's concern to insert 'cracks' in the ideal narrative, deliberately meant to anticipate a subsequent and inevitable rupture. Thus, after a three-canto long interlude of erotic pleasure the eighth canto will pick up the problem of Hammīra's not so ideal middle-position.

But before Jaitrasiṃha makes his tragic choice, we first need to wake up from the preceding flow of erotic pleasure. The opening verse explains how the bards with their musical verses announce the end of the night to prince Hammīra. What follows is long series of "good morning" verses, the *suprabhātam,* describing the break of dawn – and disappearance of darkness - in various ways, using complex poetic imagery, full of double-entendres and hints at the tragic plot. These poems within the poem are *seemingly* meant to wake up prince Hammīra from sleep before his coronation as king. At least, this is how the *suprabhātam* is used in the ever present intertext of Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa* at the end of the fifth canto. There is, however, an intriguing twist to Nayacandra's treatment of this important meta-poetic device in Sanskrit literature.

Let us start with the significance and poetic effect of the first *suprabhātam*. Waking up, regaining mental alertness by cracking such verses, might not be an easy task. The first verses thus pick up the theme of exhaustion from the previous three cantos, which concluded with the pleasing after effect of sex, namely the "happiness of sleep" (*nidrā-sukhaṃ*, 8.126), which is also the "beauty of union" (*saṅga-subhagāṃ*, 8.127).[14] Several verses suggest that the nightly lovemaking from the previous canto has deprived the lovers of sleep. Importantly, for lovers - and this includes kings like Jaitrasiṃha and

[14] We may note that their length itself - 76 verses of foreplay with the advent of spring in canto five, 65 verses of playing in the lake in canto six and 128 verses of love-making in the inner chambers in canto seven – may be suggestive of the fact that the erotic play went on very long. In other words, both for the reader and the Chauhan royals there has been no time to rest from or sleep off the exhaustion from the long night, whose erotic flavor Nayacandra sought to "bring alive" in the previous canto. That the preceding three erotic cantos are not merely meant as descriptions, 'about' the exhaustion of love, is evident from the final, transitional verse of the seventh canto, which speaks about the preceding multi-sensorial experience (pleasant touch, shining brilliance, and fragrance) and the resulting exhaustion as the "erotic mood's coming to life" (*śṛṅgāra-sañjīvana*). And interestingly, the verse self-consciously states that if the seventh, highly erotic canto is not heard, there would be a 'gap' (*khilam idam na śrutaḥ saptamaś cet sargaḥ,* 7.128).

princes like Hammīra, at whom these verses are directed - the night is not devoted to sleep.[15] One verse (8.5) explains how the entire span of a night (*kṣapā*) passes in an instant (*kṣaṇikā*). This extreme contraction of time has the (unfortunate) effect that lovers will have to sleep off the exhaustion during the day.[16] Other lovers suddenly become aware that they were still engaged in foreplay, and haven't yet consumed the 'real' act of union. In both cases there is thus no real time to sleep. One verse tells us how "as soon as those youngsters have turned their mind away from sex and *wish to sleep*" (*nivartya cetaḥ suratāt kathañcid yāvat suṣupsanti yuvāna ete*), the royal drummers announce the morning with their drums (8.7). In other words, the break of dawn comes as an unwelcome surprise, loaded with confusion, a recurrent theme in these verses. Importantly, these verses – or the royal poets – are supposed to 'nudge' the intended audience out of sleep. Consider for example the following two verses, which explicitly and somewhat paradoxically thematize the intended nudging or breaking effect of the *suprabhātam*:

"Even this lady Night has turned bright!
And still now you hold on to your feigned arrogance?"
With these words someone easily pushed away
the firmly rooted pride of his lover.

Later, after having put the game of sex in front,
a woman, although sleepy, awoke first.
Having embraced her sleepy lover,
she didn't leave the bed, afraid of
breaking his sleep.[17]

It's hard to render the effect of these verses into English. The first verse makes audible the sudden surprise – and perhaps the concomitant panic and confusion– of the male lover who wants to make an end to the feigned pride (*māna*) of his lover, in which she persisted all night. In order to stop her playful games of pretense – and thus go over to the 'real' act of lovemaking – someone thus shouts "that even this lady Night has turned

[15] Nayacandra might in fact be suggesting that Hammīra enters the crucial eighth canto, where he will receive important instructions on kingship, in a fatal condition of sleeplessness. This is more like a state of being asleep while being awake. It is this fatal state of a 'sleepy wakefulness' that leads to the tragic unfolding of the poem, as I explain in the next chapter. This fatal condition is already hinted at in one of the *suprabhātam* verses, as I explain below.

[16] Some verses make explicit how with the break of dawn, the lovers go to sleep (8.13 and 8.14).

[17] vibhā vibhātaîva vibhāvarîyam adyāpi mānaṃ kim ivâdadhāsi|
iti priyāyā api baddha-mūlaṃ mānaṃ sukhenaîva nunoda kaścit ||8.12||
saṃbhoga-keliṃ pravidhāya paścāt suptā 'pi nārī prathama-prabuddhā |
āliṅgya suptaṃ priya-supti-bhaṅgaṃ viśaṅkamānā na jahāti talpam ||8.13||

bright" (*vibhā vibhātaîva vibhāvarîyam*). Through the threefold repetition of *vibhā* "light, sun" the Sanskrit may sound more like a lover's panicking shout "It's day! It's day! It's day!". This cry has the intended effect. It pushed away (*nunoda*) or "nudged" the pride of his lover. They can make love now, during the day. And afterwards, as the second verse suggests, they will want to sleep off the exhaustion - during the day. The woman, who woke up first, tries *not* to break the sleep of his lover. Again, like earlier, the "break" in "breaking the sleep" *supti-bhaṅgaṃ* is emphatically placed as the last word of the third pāda, before the metrical pause. The poet, indeed, does try to 'nudge' the sleepy characters out of bed, and 'break' their sleepiness.

Many of Nayacandra's 'good-morning' verses subtly signal the inevitable tragic outcome of the poem, covering all the important tragic themes: confusion, blindness, pride, fame, etc.

One verse (8.9), for example, evokes the crucial topic of fame, explaining how both kings and poets achieve it when they obtain wakefulness (*prāpta-prabodhā*), by listening to their gurus and direct their attention to the production of pure meaning/statecraft (*nirmalârthôtpattiṃ*).[18] For the argument of this chapter I want to zoom in on the underlying message or meaning in two verses. One verse evokes the fascinating image of a 'quivering exhaustion'. I want to suggest that this is a favorite image of our poet, which he employs more than once to describe the paradoxical and fatal condition of a sleepy sleeplessness or restlessness to which the Chauhans fall victim. The other verse, I suggest, is meant to foreshadow Jaitrasiṃha's fatal choice to bestow kingship on Hammīra. I'll start with the former.

> Having also remained awake the entire night, out of curiosity
> to behold the love making of married couples,
> the candle lights in the pleasure houses
> are now shaking, as if their exhaustion
> is quivering.[19]

This verse explains, in poetic fancy, why in the morning the candle lights are flickering or shaking, losing its steadiness before the oil is exhausted and the flame goes out.[20] It is

[18] The verse plays upon the dual meaning of *artha* as the poet's goal to create meaningful poetry and the king's goal to strive for political success. At the end of his poem Nayacandra scorns poets who just meaninglessly combine words to create poetic effects for sound alone, such poems have no *rasa* (14.35).

[19] jāyā-patīnāṃ rati-kautukena rātriṃ samagrām api jāgaritvā |
ghūrṇanty amī visphurita-pramīlā iva pradīpā rati-mandireṣu ||8.6||

[20] An anonymous *suprabhātam* verse in the *Śārṅgadharapaddhati* quoted and translated in Warder (2011: 201, § 8272) adopts the same imagery: "The night has mostly gone, Moon-face, the Moon seems withered, the lamp is in the power of drowsiness, he seems to nod."

because they stayed up all night, out of curiosity (*kautukena*), to behold the love making (*rati*) of husbands and wives. The idea is that the flames are literally at the verge of complete exhaustion. They appear to mimic how people try to fight drowsiness, nodding or shaking their 'heads' to and fro (*ghūrṇanti*), in order to not fall asleep. Their sleepiness therefore *appears* to be something powerful, quivering, or throbbing with life (*visphurita*). Ultimately this effort will be in vain. A flame typically goes out after performing - or being subjected to -this last shaking movement, just like people will eventually fall asleep despite efforts to keep their drowsy heads steady. Nayacandra will evoke a similar image when describing Hammīra's fatal shaking or quivering *sleeplessness* in the penultimate canto.[21] Again, this happens through the intervention of a bard who vainly tries to awake the sleepy - that is sleepless - Chauhan king, right before his final fatal error. There's also a meta-poetic statement here. The readers, like the lamps, were also present when hearing the love making scenes from the seventh canto. Like the lamps, the readers are supposed to nod (*ghūrṇanti*) their heads in approval when hearing good poetry.[22]

Let us now finally consider the verse which, I believe, is suggestive of Jaitrasiṃha's tragic error. Like many of the other *suprabhātam* verses, it brings up the important theme of stupidity or confusion, arising at the transition from night to dawn.

> Because of their simultaneous descending and rising,
> the discs of the moon and sun assume the same form.
> In distinguishing between East and West,
> the mind of people instantly reaches
> stupidity, oh King![23]

The idea is that at dawn, both the orb of the moon and sun become visible at the same time. Their natural distinction (as markers of day and night) gets lost. Therefore, upon waking, some people– perhaps especially for those who have stayed up all night, and for whom the night eclipsed in one instant – become confused. They lose their sense of distinguishing (*vibheda*) the sun from the moon, and therefore also East from West. The verse appears to be directed at king Jaitrasiṃha himself, and his subsequent stupidity. There is indeed a vocative *īśa,* "Oh King", which stands suspiciously close to the final word *jāḍyam,* stupidity. We may even take it as a compound: the mind of people reaches the "stupidity of kings" (*īśa-jāḍyam*). Mistaking East and West (*pūrvâparayor*) can be said to

[21] In 13.146.

[22] I thank Yigal Bronner for pointing this out to me, in my discussion of this metaphor in a verse from Nayacandra's *Rambhāmañjarī*, quoted in the beginning of the introduction.

[23] sama-svarūpe śaśino raveś ca bimbe 'stabhāvād udayatvataś ca |
upaiti pūrvâparayor vibhede matir janānāṃ kṣanaṃ īśa jāḍyam ||8.17||

anticipate, and literally read as Jaitrasiṃha's subsequent tragic choice of handing over the kingdom, not to the eldest, earlier born son (*pūrva*), but to the other, later born son (*apara*) Hammīra. To express the important quality of discernment (*viveka*) Nayacandra purposefully uses the word *vibheda,* the "splitting, breaking" of things. Again, this word, indicative of the dangerous rupture in the Chauhan's fortune, is placed emphatically at the end of the third pāda, before the metrical pause. [24] It is also not a coincidence, as I will show below, that Jaitrasiṃha's idea to bestow kingship on Hammīra occurred to him in a divine dream-vision, at the end of the night. This moment is traditionally aligned with moments of insight, but potentially also a moment of confusion, as many of Hammīra's *suprabhātam* verses show.

Apart from hinting at the tragic plot, I want to suggest that these verses also make a point about time itself, and its somewhat paradoxical and positive connection to the topic of Fortune/Splendor (Śrī). Time is not only the invisible 'dark' force that takes away beauty or splendor, but also bestows it.

> Dawn – the Time of day-break – as if extracting it
> from the owl, the moon, and the blue waterlily
> bestows joy, light and beauty (*śriyam*)
> upon the ruddy goose, the sun, and the day-lotus.
>
> It must be that the mass of darkness, after having abandoned the earth
> out of fear for the misconduct of the Moon - Lord of Splendor -
> entered the eyes of the owls - those who go by night.
> Just look! Which other explanation is there for their condition?[25]

As the emergence of the break of Dawn (*vibhāta-kālaḥ*) Time is said to extract (*ā-kṛṣ*) beauty of Splendor (*śriyam*) from the owl, moon and water-lily, conferring it on the sun, the ruddy goose and the day-lotus. And the reason why Fortune makes this shift is linked to the problem of bad conduct (*ahita,* 8.31) (of the Moon). Time's shifting power is therefore not inherently a dark or random force. It is responsible for the liveliness and brilliance at both night- and daytime, and it follows a moral logic. In a crucial sense, the brilliance of Fortune is always present. Fortune might regress or wane from the Chauhan's perspective, or on their side, but in fact she is likely to shine and play

[24] Like the use of the word *bhaṅgī* in *3.46* and *4.92*, announcing the rupture caused, respectively by Pṛthvīrāja and Vīranārāyaṇa.

[25] ghūkād ivêndor iva nīla-nīra-ruhād ivâkṛṣya vibhāta-kālaḥ |
rathâṅga-nāmârka-saro-ruheṣu mudaṃ prakāśaṃ śriyam ādadhāti ||8.31||
patyū rucīnām ahitād bhayena tamaḥ-samūho virahayya dhātrīm
niśāṭa-netrāṇi viveśa nūnam utpaśyatâiteṣu kuto 'nyathā 'bhūt ||8.32||

somewhere else. In other words, the diminishing of the Chauhan's fortune (and fame) may run parallel with the increase of Fortune elsewhere.

As explained later, the imagery of the day-blind owls (and their enmity with the clever crows) signals the inevitable reversal of Fortune.[26] But the real insight that may be gained from such verses is that Śrī is always there. The elusive working of time or the fickle nature of fortune are not to be blamed for her disappearance. It may have something to do with the misconduct (*ahita*) of kings, which makes Śrī find fortune somewhere else.

In any case, the concluding verse again makes explicit that the delightful heaviness of the *suprabhātam*, is supposed to effect an awakening: "Dawn - the Time of daybreak – is made known through these marvelous 'burdens' of speech, *which are the rays of awakening*" (*adbhutair vākya-bharair vibodha-karaiḥ samākhyāta vibhāta-kālaḥ,* 8.35). But we may also reflect on the difficult task of the royal poet: how do you awake someone who hasn't slept?[27] Here might lie a crucial difference with the *suprabhātam* verses in Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa.* The poet there manages to wake up the Aja, the sleepy prince, from an actual state of sleep, achieving the intended effect of re-activating Fortune's presence. In HMK by contrast, the Chauhan heroes never sleep (and therefore also never wake up).

3.3 Remembering Suratrāṇa: dissonant intertextual echoes

Right after the first *suprabhātam*, we learn that king Jaitrasiṃha is thrilled with joy when seeing the noble conduct of his son Hammīra, performing the morning rituals, including the "game of donations" (*dāna-keli,* 8.35). In verse 8.37 we learn that Jaitrasiṃha, "the knower of secret teachings" (*rahasya-vedī*), took him to a secluded place and informed Hammīra about his desire to hand over his symbolic wife Fortune. This setting already gives the impression that the eldest son Suratrāṇa - the legitimate heir to the throne - is excluded from Jaitrasiṃha's vision. He tells prince Hammīra the following:

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[26] This theme will recur as an allusion to the famous *Pañcatantra* story of the enmity between the crows and the owls, evoked by Hammīra himself who seems to misinterpret the gist of the story (see my discussion of verse 9.180 in chapter four, section 4.3) This is a story about the (perpetual) shift of fortunes (and the workings of Time): a bloody massacre inflicted by the physically powerful (but day-blind) owls on the weaker but more intelligent crows turns into a revengeful destruction of the owls' camp. The story can be read as a 'sequel' to the ominous prelude of the *Sauptikaparvan* in the *Mahābhārata*, where the night massacre inflicted by Aśvatthāman was inspired by the night attack of the owls on a tree with sleeping crows.

[27] I return to this point in the next chapter, in section 4.6 "Waking the sleepless", where I discuss a crucial episode in the penultimate canto where a bard intervenes – again – with two verses about the break of Dawn (13.145-6) in order to awaken Hammīra from his fatal condition of sleeplessness.

When – in order to hold grip of Lady Fortune of complete sovereignty –
there was a son who is endowed with clever intelligence,
and who is the best among the wise,
then our praiseworthy ancestors
were never subdued by misfortune.[28]

This is the start of a set of arguments to convince Hammīra to take over the burden of kingship. In Jaitrasiṃha's (confused?) vision Hammīra makes the perfect successor, the ideal son on whom to confer his symbolic wife. He starts his argument with a lesson from the past. In secret he tells Hammīra that when there's an intelligent son, endowed with *pratibhā*, "illumination, insight", there is no danger in transferring the kingdom's royal fortune (*sāmrājya-lakṣmī*). This argument makes sense in light of the example of his own father, the minister-turned-king Vāgbhaṭa, "the warrior of insight" (*pratibhā-bhaṭaḥ,* 4.94) who prevented the Chauhan's Royal Fortune from falling (- as discussed in the previous chapter). But the reader has the superior knowledge that Jaitrasiṃha might be making a mistake, that with Hammīra's kingship their praiseworthy dynasty will be subdued by misfortune, *vi-ṣama,* literally by that which is "un-even, odd, split, irregular, incompatible, adverse". Like Jaitrasiṃha we know that Royal Fortune can only be maintained by wise and prudent kings, skilled in good policy (*nīti, naya*) like Vāgbhaṭa, *and* the excluded elder son Suratrāṇa. But unlike Jaitrasiṃha, we know that Hammīra is not such a ruler.

Quite interestingly, Hammīra himself points out the problem to his father. First, he implies that he doesn't want the compound *narakāntam* – "beloved by men" (*nara-kāntam*) or split differently "whose end is hell" (*naraka-antam*) – to apply in its twofold meaning to the kingdom (*rājyam,* 8.51). With his kingship the beloved kingdom may turn into hell. Hammīra then hints at the fact that he might be lacking the quintessential royal quality of right judgment (*viveka*). Let me quote Hammīra's protesting voice:

Oh King! When at your lotus feet I long
to become the goose for the kingdom,
who discriminates between good and bad
this kingship, which brings about clear stains,
never leads to happiness![29]

[28] sāmrājya-lakṣmī-kara-pīḍanāya jāta-pravīṇa-pratibhe tanūje |
vidāṃ vareṇye kvacanâpi nâsmad vaṃśyāḥ praśasyā viṣamâbhivaśyāḥ ||8.38||
[29] tvat-pāda-padme sad-asad-viveka-kṛd rājya-haṃsatvam abhīpsato me |
harṣāya suvyakta-kalaṅka-kāri rājan na rājatvam idaṃ kadācit ||8.52 ||

Hammīra is in fact hinting at something his father told him himself, in verse 8.45, namely that young people become tremulous or shaking (*uttaralī-bhavantaḥ*), and do not even *remember* what good or bad acts are (*kṛtyāny akṛtyāny api na smaranti*) – clearly echoing what happened to Vīranarāyaṇa. The reason for such oblivion might be that young people carry the burden of youth's madness (*yauvanônmāda-bhare,* 8.46). Hammīra seems to be knowing that he will lack the skill of the goose to distinguish (*viveka*) *sat* from *a-sat,* good from evil, truth from falseness, or reality from illusion. Hammīra then *reminds* his father that he is not the legitimate heir to the throne:

> As they say (*kila*), when there is an elder son
> Royal Fortune (Lakṣmī) should never be given to another.
> How is it possible that the king, who also knows
> this condition of the path of right policy (*naya*),
> wants to give her to *me*?[30]

Hammīra explains to Jaitrasiṃha that he is thus violating the rules of right policy (*naya*). Perhaps the verse also reminds us of the earlier description of Hammīra's elder brother Suratrāṇa as the spring to the blooming vine of *naya.*[31] He would therefore naturally be the right choice for Lakṣmī. How can his father not know this, and "give her to *me*" - who doesn't excel in this field? Why is his elder brother (*jyeṣṭha*) literally excluded from the conversation; and from the narrative? Apart from a brief but clear reminder of his existence at the end of the previous canto (in 7.120) Suratrāṇa's name never turns up again. Like Jaitrasiṃha, the reader too is put to the test of remembering how important characters/thematic elements are introduced and disappear, but clearly leave a tragic trace, as here.[32] But Jaitrasiṃha shuts down Hammīra's argument by mentioning his dream-vision.

> "After giving the kingdom to Hammīradeva,
> delight yourself in serving my feet."
> In this way Viṣṇu spoke to me
> in a dream at daybreak, lying in the harem.
> So son, what can I do?[33]

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[30] jyeṣṭhe tanūje sati rājya-lakṣmīr deyā kadācin na kilêtarasmai |
jānann apîtthaṃ naya-vartma-saṃsthāṃ mahyaṃ kathaṃ ditsati tām adhīśaḥ ||8.53||

[31] In 4.159.

[32] I will further discuss Nayacandra's 'play with silence' as a running theme in the next chapter.

[33] hammīradevāya vitīrya rājyaṃ mad-aṅghri-sevā-nirato bhaveti |
svapne niśânte śayitaṃ ni-śānte mām āha viṣṇuḥ karavai kim ārya ||8.54||

We learn in the following verse (8.55) that in this way the king forcefully or *stubbornly* (*haṭhena*) – a crucial detail – silenced Hammīra.

> Then, having stubbornly made him answerless,
> the king convinced the great-minded Hammīradeva
> - even though he was unwilling -
> to take over Royal Fortune.[34]

Jaitrasiṃha's stubborn (*haṭhena*) refutation of Hammīra's 'warning' will become one of the most defining traits of Hammīra's tragedy, whose 'obstinacy' *haṭha,* became indeed stuck to him as an epithet.[35]

But there is more to this whole episode revolving around Hammīra's problematic and unwilling entrance into kingship. First of all, both the problem of Hammīra's middle position and the 'dream-vision' solution are clearly meant to allude to the genre of patron-centered poetry. And here too, as I explained about HMK's modelling on this genre in his prologue, it may be parodic in effect. The "as they say" (*kila*) of Hammīra's own reply might add to the sense that Nayacandra is indeed playing with tradition. By making Hammīra the illegitimate 'middle brother' Nayacandra is purposefully letting his poem resonate with what Yigal Bronner identified as the core thematic problem of two famous, influential historical poems: Bāṇa's seventh-century *Harṣacarita*, written in praise of his patron king Harṣa, and Bilhaṇa's eleventh-century *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*, likewise composed to eulogize the life story of his royal patron. Bronner suggests that both poets "may have been hired to put a positive spin" to a political drama involving the ascendancy of the middle brother to the throne.[36] To save their patron's name these poets skillfully craft a story in which the king-patron is presented as *unwilling* to accept the throne. Bronner demonstrates how Bilhaṇa deliberately emulates Bāṇa in his solution to the same political problem, with the effect of praising his patron as a second emperor Harṣa. Like Bāṇa's Harṣa, Bilhaṇa's patron-hero Vikrama is presented as being "forced to take part in the political game".[37] However, Bronner shows how Bilhaṇa purposefully creates a

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[34] niruttarīkṛtya tato haṭhenânicchantam apy enam atuccha-cittam |
hammīradevaṃ nṛpatitva-lakṣmīm amīmanal lātum ilā-vilāsī ||8.55||

[35] I briefly discuss the literary tradition of 'Stubborn Hammīra' (*Hammīra-haṭha*) in section 5.3 in the final chapter. Here we might get the impression that the transfer of sovereignty from father to son seems to accompany the inheritance of fatal character traits. Each member in the Chauhan dynasty indeed seems to reenact the tragic life story of his predecessors. Sometimes it skips over a generation. There were a few exceptions like the goose-like Govindarāja and the tree-like Vāgbhaṭa, who both, after being dismissed by their ruling family members, were given the role of preventing the Chauhan's Royal Fortune from falling.

[36] Bronner 2010: 469.

[37] ibid.

dissonance between the adopted ideal template, to "unimagine the political", as his article is aptly called. Bilhaṇa's patron-centered epic shows a profound ambivalence toward his patron and his own job, as a wandering poet hired by patron-kings to render their life stories into epic poetry.

Nayacandra, like Bilhaṇa, both emulates and steps away from the model set by Bāṇa. He goes way further than Bilhaṇa's hallmark poetics of ambivalence. The verse quoted above (8.55) clearly reaches back to Bāṇa's verse where the unwilling prince Harṣa is said to have been forcefully (*balāt*) made to ascend the throne.[38] Instead of *balāt* "by force" Nayacandra has the similar *haṭhena*, which has the important extra connotation of "stubbornness". We could say that Hammīra too is thus praised as a noble character, refusing to accept the throne, telling his father to give it to his elder brother. At this point in the poem this may be very much the case.

But saving Hammīra's name is clearly not the point of the canto. Let me repeat, Nayacandra's poem is *not* a patron-centered epic narrating the rise (*abhyudaya)* of a patron to success and glory. It is a story of a king's path to destruction (*vināśa*), and its causes. Let me start by claiming that his elder brother Suratrāṇa "Sultan" is obviously one of the many fictional characters in the poem, turning up to test how the Chauhan heroes respond to their fate. (Many historians miss their symbolic significance and take Suratrāṇa and characters like Dharmasiṃha, Bhīmasiṃha and Ratipāla for real, historical characters.) I want to suggest that Suratrāṇa is meant to highlight the tragic choice of Hammīra's father Jaitrasiṃha, rather than to emphasize the nobility of his son Hammīra. Nayacandra inserts 'Suratrāṇa' as an opportunity to play with the well-known tradition of patron-centered court epic. Instead of having been paid to give a positive twist to a real political problem, Nayacandra - for the sake of intertextual play - is *inventing a problem.* Similarly, Jaitrasiṃha's divine dream-vision may just sound as another allusive nod to a well-known poetic 'solution' in the poetry surrounding the Jain king Kumārapāla and the Jain minister Vastupāla, whose careers similarly involved problems of ascendancy.[39]

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[38] Thus, compare Bāṇa who has "*...anicchantam api balād...*" (quoted from Bronner 2010: 470 n 37) and Nayacandra who has "*...haṭhenânicchantam apy...*".

[39] As it appears from A.K. Majumdar careful exploration of the many sources of Caulukya history (1956), it is not unlikely that similar motivations might have prompted the Jain scholar Hemacandra to compose his poem on Kumārapāla. Majumdar points out that Kumārapāla's rather problematic rise to power must have involved a conflict in ascendancy between Bhīma I's descendants (p.160-164). In the case of the poetry about Vastupāla's ministry, it is clearly related to the shift from Chaulukya to Vaghela rule in the middle of the thirteenth century, and the role played by Vastupāla and his brother Tejaḥpāla in serving the generals Lavanaprasāda and Vīradhavala, the defacto rulers during the weak reign of Bhīma I. Majumdar problematizes this *seemingly* friendly shift from Chaulukya to Vaghela power, precisely by drawing attention to the many different versions of contemporary poets – i.e. from Vastupāla's literary circle – about the replacement of Bhīma. He refers to the practice of poets "to shroud with vagueness the foul deeds of their

Nayacandra was clearly familiar with this poetry, and how poets tried to refashion contemporary political problems into eulogistic poetry. Nayacandra seems to invert the effects these 'poetic strategies' are supposed to have in the genre of patron-centered epic. Nayacandra may be playfully emulating how poets like Bilhaṇa emulate Bāṇa's 'solution' to a political problem. It's like a parody of a parody. In Nayacandra's poem there is no real reason to solve a political problem. Nevertheless, at this stage, it may take away the future blame that is bound to attach to Hammīra's kingship. It is Jaitrasiṃha's stubbornness (*haṭha*) that inaugurates the beginning of the irreversible tragic chain. He is to be blamed for Hammīra's not so ideal entrance into kingship. After all, Hammīra didn't choose to become king. Ultimately, the reader may thus trace the inevitable destruction of Ranthambhor to Jaitrasiṃha's choice to give Royal Fortune to the 'wrong' son, instead of to his older son "Suratrāṇa", the "Sultan". It adds an extra dimension of complexity to the tragic chain, anticipating the poem's concern to explore multiple visions on the 'truth' behind Hammīra's tragedy. But the effect here, I believe, is mostly parodic, perhaps slightly humorous.

Indeed, Jaitrasiṃha's dream-vision - at that confusing middle moment of twilight - just doesn't sound convincing in Nayacandra's poem - as it might have been the case already in the poems of Kumārapāla and Vastupāla. It reads as the actualization of the bard's ominous verse (8.17), about the confusion upon awaking, making people mix up the distinction between East and West (*pūrvâparayor*), or indeed between the qualities of the first (*pūrva*) and second-born son (*apara*). It is hard to forget Hammīra's own darker vision about the clear stains (*suvyakta-kalaṅka*) and the kingdom's potential destination as hell (*naraka-anta*), looming over Jaitrasiṃha's choice. Moreover, it seems that Jaitrasiṃha has to repay his tragic decision with a sudden, 'unexpected' death, apparently produced by the adverse workings of fate (*vidhi*). Or is it by the delusions and confusions caused by time (*kāla*)? This might be the central question that the eighth canto seems concerned with.

patrons" (p. 163) by using literary devices such as the insertion of a divine dream. He gives the example of Someśvara's *Kīrtikaumudī* where Lavanaprasāda was told in a dream by Gurjara-rājalakṣmī, the goddess of Royal Fortune, to save the kingdom of Gujarat which was decaying under the weak rule of Bhīma. Someśvara, when asked to explain this dream, convinces Lavanaprasāda to follow the divine message. Accordingly, he takes over the rule of Gujarat and appoints the ministers Vastupāla and Tejaḥpāla as his advisors. In Arisiṃha's poem it is king Bhīma himself who was told in his dream by Kumārapāla to bestow the kingdom on these generals.

3.4 Do not forget: Śrī, Kali and the Śaka's flashing trickery (*lasac-chalena*)

Before turning to the story of Jaitrasiṃha's death and the ensuing 'debate' between the forces of Time and Fate, I want to briefly draw attention to two episodes that intervene: a short praise of Hammīra's ideal kingship, followed by Jaitrasiṃha's long lecture to his son on good governance. The latter seems to purposefully undermine the former and foreshadow all Hammīra's upcoming flaws.

After Jaitrasiṃha entrusts Royal Fortune to Hammīra, the poem briefly resumes the hyperbolic, ideal (and unreal) panegyric mode to praise Hammīra's kingship (8.65-71). As earlier, and later in the poem, the ideal rhetoric in such verses seems to generate a stark dissonance with the actualized tragic story preceding or following the eulogistic interlude. It is thus only in the panegyric mode (as praise and lamentation), occupying an illusory place outside of time, that Hammīra's kingdom emerges as the locus of a roaring Dharma, shining Śrī, blooming policy, and dancing joy (8.68).[40] In Jaitrasiṃha's subsequent long lecture on kingship the inevitable break of the ideal image can already be felt. These verses seem to flesh out earlier ideas about the all-important topic of Royal Fortune (*rājya-śrī*) and its necessary connection to good conduct, wisdom (*buddhi, mati*) and right judgment (*viveka*) – all associated with wakefulness. Like in the prologue, Śrī is presented as the principle underlying the (female) power of the self (*ātma-śakti,* 8.76), which is far superior to the display of masculine bodily strength. The recurrent idea is that Royal Fortune *can* be maintained, if she is handled with care, and if one doesn't overestimate the value of physical force.

Hammīra is urged to take this advice at heart. The second verse (8.74) of Jaitrasiṃha's talk thus says that Hammīra should *not forget (vismaro mā)* that it is the king's ill-mannered behavior, like fire out of control, that *causes the destruction of the entire clan* (*kulasya sarvasya vināśa-hetuḥ*). Jaitrasiṃha's lecture becomes more and more ominous as his advice about the importance of good governance becomes more concrete: one should not torment the people with taxes, not re-appoint ministers you harmed, not engage in the dice game and become a subject of ridicule (*viḍambanām,* 8.104) like the Pāṇḍavas, etc. We get the impression that Hammīra will indeed do precisely what his father warns against. Put otherwise, Jaitrasiṃha's warning that his son should not *forget* his advice anticipates Hammīra's inevitable oblivion in the next canto.

[40] Thus in the tenth canto, a brief set of panegyric verses, uttered by Bhojadeva, is followed by a conspicuous "but in the present time" (*adhunā... paraṃ,* 10.28), revealing what is actually happening: a blind man (Hammīra/Dharmasiṃha) is gambling in the kingdom, see my discussion of this episode in chapter four, section 4.4.

To the reader these verses indeed read as flashbacks to his predecessors, and flashforwards to the tragic kingship of the last Chauhan ruler. Let me quote just one highly ominous verse, which implicitly reintroduces the topic of Kali, the demonic spirit of 'conflict' from the present age, the *kaliyuga*:

> Even though one has great strength, one should not cause a conflict (*kali*)
> with the Śaka king, who is endowed with flashing trickery.
> In the same way, king Bali, even though very strong, was defeated
> by Viṣṇu, mostly because of trickery.[41]

This verse makes explicit that the *kaliyuga* is dominated by the superior 'playful' tricks of the Śaka kings. Hammīra's task does not consist in obtaining Royal Fortune, but to *maintain* her – press her hand (*kara-pīḍana,* 8.38) - *by not starting a conflict (*kali*) with the Śaka king*. All he has to do is not forget this advice and not engage in war with an enemy who is more powerful, that is one who is endowed with flashing trickery (*lasac-chalena*). Importantly, the employment of deceit (*chala*) is not part of the many warnings against "bad conduct" *ku-śīlatā,* (8.77). As Don Handelman and David Shulman put it in their insightful book on Śiva's game of dice, cheating or trickery is "the natural mode of play, inherent to the game as an aspect of its very structure."[42] It is something the clever trickster takes pride in, like Viṣṇu, who is known as the "great trickster" *māyāvin.*[43] Nayacandra clearly adopts this view, by repeatedly emphasizing how in the game like context of war (and life and poetry) clever deceit – an attitude of playfulness - outweighs the value of an outer display of physical force.[44] Moreover, the Śaka king is not vilified in this verse. His superior skill in deceit (*chala*) is purposefully connected to the recurrent motif of playing/shining/flashing (*lasat*, *<las.*), an essential attribute of Śrī and her role as a female power (*śakti*), through which she energizes her royal husbands, thus including the Śaka king.[45] This is made clear through the comparison of the Śaka king with Viṣṇu's

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[41] mahābalenâpi kalir na kāryaḥ samaṃ śakêśena lasac-chalena |
tathā samartho 'pi balir vijagye chala-pradhānena janārdanena ||8.103||

[42] Handelman and Shulman 1997: 100.

[43] Ibid. p. 80.

[44] I will show in the next chapter how an over-confidence in physical strength aligns more generally with the hero's unplayful rigidity of mind, his unwillingness to bend the supposed 'rules' of a chivalric code and what *he* believes constitutes noble conduct.

[45] Also recall how in the poem's introduction this word is used to qualify Śiva/Mahāvīra who, followed by his female consort, is endowed with a playful/flashing power *śivânuyāto vilasad-vibhūti,* 1.5) allowing him to destroy the demon Andhaka/darkness. It is interestingly also the attribute of the playful poet (*lasat-kavi*), whose creative power is similarly bestowed upon him by the goddess Sarasvatī. Here it is the attribute of Viṣṇu and the Śaka king to whom he is compared. Let's also recall how earlier Pṛthvīrāja's enemy

former incarnation as a dwarf who deceitfully tricked the generous *asura* king Bali into giving away his kingdom. In Nayacandra's poem it is indeed the Śaka who plays the role of Śiva or Viṣṇu, the *māyāvin* or trickster. He lives by deceit, and therefore remains resistant to the fatal effect of delusion, as explained earlier.[46] Throughout the poem the sleepy protagonists forget, the wakeful antagonists remember.[47] Moreover, unlike the Chauhan protagonists, the Śakas seem to know how to confront or even master time, and therefore also their personal fates.

Let me give one example to illustrate this point. In verse 13.68 we learn that Alauddin as it were saw the arrival of Time right before his eyes (*sākṣāt kālaṃ ivâgatam*), after experiencing the destructive force of the monsoon season (*ambumuk-kālam*). The rains had drenched his camp, causing many deaths, leading many of his soldiers to abandon their military service (13.67). Although his camp is on the verge of destruction, and his soldiers are deserting him, Alauddin comes up with a clever plan. Instead of despairing in the face of Time's destructive force, he invites Hammīra's most beloved general, Ratipāla – "Protector of Pleasure" - to his camp and manages to make him "attached" (*arañjayac*) through trickery (*kūṭena,* 13.72). (The political game, like love, is a game of attachment/attraction, and playful deception.)[48] It might not be a coincidence that the word for trickery here - *kūṭa* - is chosen to resonate with the story of the black *kāla-kūṭa* poison, "the trick of time", which emerged at 'the beginning of time' with the churning of the milky ocean, and to which Hammīra will refer as the evil product of fate, as I explain below in the next section. Śiva swallowed this poison, becoming the god of Time, the great destroyer god *Mahākāla.*

In HMK too Śiva is evoked as this destructive principle, *mahā-kāla*, "Great Time" or the "Great Darkness". During Hammīra's "world-conquest" (*digvijaya*), when passing Ujjain, "he there worshipped Mahākāla, who is Death to wicked enemies" (*tatrânarca mahākālaṃ kālaṃ duṣkarma-vairiṇām*). But it is Alauddin who emerges as the real master of time. In the episode where he defies Kāla's destructive force, he emerges as the "trickster king of the Śakas" (*māyāvī śakêśvaraḥ,* 13.81), who uses Hammīra's general Ratipāla to play a destructive 'dice game' in Hammīra's fort. We learn how the demonic spirit of the *kaliyuga* takes over Ratipāla's mind, becoming like Śakuni (the trickster-gambler of the *Mahābhārata*) to the Śaka king (13.80). Despite clear signs of treason, Hammīra will fail to

Shahabuddin was imagined as an incarnation of Paraśurāma (3.10), another avatar of Viṣṇu, descended on earth to destroy the whole warrior race, and compared to Śiva as the destroyer of the three cities (3.12).

[46] At the end of section 2.4.

[47] For example, fear, inspired by remembering past defeats, leads both Shahabuddin and Ulugh Khan to resort to trickery, respectively in 3.53 and 11.19. The Chauhans, by contrast, do not seem to learn from their past mistakes.

[48] See for example Ali 2002.

see that Kali is indeed playing dice (*dīvyati*) in his fort.[49] Alauddin appears to emerge as the more wakeful king, mastering his fate and time itself, employing its own trickery (*kūṭa*). Unlike Hammīra, the Śakas escape that fatal state of delusion which haunts the Chauhans, as noted earlier: "do those who live by trickery ever err in their tricks (*kūṭôpajīvinaḥ kiṃ vā kūṭe muhyanti kutracit*, 13.72)?

3.5 "How long will this goose play?"

In this final section I will return to what I believe constitutes the story line of the eighth canto: Jaitrasiṃha's tragic choice of bestowing kingship on the wrong son. After Jaitrasiṃha's lecture on kingship, we learn about his desire to leave behind the burden of kingship and do good for his Self (*svâtma-hitaṃ,* 8.106, repeated in 8.12) in a town named "Illustrious Hermitage" (*śrī-āśramaṃ,* 8.106). Interestingly, he will never reach this town. The episode revolves around the ministers' laments and complaints: they seem not to agree with Jaitrasiṃha's decision to leave the kingdom in the hands of Hammīra. They break into tears (8.109) when realizing that Jaitrasiṃha will abandon the kingdom, seeming to know what Hammīra too predicted. They explain that when Jaitrasiṃha left behind Royal Fortune (*sāṃrājya-lakṣmīṃ*) earlier "our own good fortunes do not reach their former Splendor, like fireflies in the darkness of being separated from you" (*khadyota-vat tvad virahândhakāre bhāgyāni no yānti purā-prakāśām*, 8.110). They further explain that without the sun-like Jaitrasiṃha the Splendor (*śriyam*) of the city *will* turn into darkness (*prapatsyante,* 8.111) - the future mode is used purposefully to express certainty. Like earlier with Hammīra's own protest, Jaitrasiṃha doesn't heed their words. He tries to assure them that Hammīra will make a great king. "Do not worry" (*mā kārṣṭa kaṣṭaṃ*), Jaitrasiṃha explains, "this is not desired by the wise" (*viduṣām aniṣṭaṃ*, 8.112). There is no reason for their worry. He explains them in verse 8.113 that Hammīra is like the rising moon who will fill up the empty darkness left by the setting sun: the kingdom will indeed soon (*a-cireṇa*, and literally "not long") become very splendorous (*prakāma-śrīkaṃ*). Interestingly, Jaitrasiṃha supports his vision on the future by referring to Hammīra's (traditional) stature as an ideal, praiseworthy king:

> When this royal goose to my lotus-like dynasty,
> praised in this world by all his qualities.

[49] See my discussion of this episode in the next chapter, in section 4.5.

is served like me, with his gracious gifts
he will grant you perpetual bliss.[50]

Again, a huge contrast plays out between Jaitrasiṃha's bright vision of the future and the darker visions held by his ministers, and earlier by Hammīra himself. Everyone but Jaitrasiṃha seems to know that the darker vision lies closer to the truth.

Unfortunately, the ministers do not get to respond. As soon as Jaitrasiṃha reaches the sacred city of Pallī while dismissing (*vi-sṛjan*) his ministers with the above words, a (poisonous) spider (*lūtā*) appeared, fell down on him, making him die instantly (8.115). This verse comes entirely unexpected. It might sound as an echo of an episode in the eighth canto of *Raghuvaṃśa*, where Aja's wife Indumatī dies unexpectedly from a flower falling from the sky. Like in *Raghuvaṃśa*, such an unexpected death is followed by the lamentations of the king who is left behind, blaming the adverse workings of Fate (*vidhi*).[51] But the atmosphere in Nayacandra's poem is quite unlike the pitiful lament of Aja in *Raghuvaṃśa's* eighth canto, where he eventually dies from grief and becomes happily united with his wife in heaven. In Nayacandra's poem it brings the audience back to the main theme of the canto, and poem as a whole: the importance of waking up from delusional visions.

Like Aja with the loss of his beloved wife Indumatī, Hammīra becomes entirely caught up in his sorrow, with his self being grasped by delusion (*moha-grahilī-kṛtâtmā*, 8.117). It is in this state of delusion – this is important – that he utters his laments (8.119-122), directed at the cruel workings of Fate as the Creator god (*vidhi, vedhas, dhātṛ*), the force that ordains life, and appears to cause destruction (*vināśa-hetoḥ*, 8.119) without any reason. Let me give one example of Hammīra's lament:

Fire, bad people, and the *kāla-kūṭa* poison ("the trick of time") –
who created those things that have the power to harm others?
Today the answer is born: it is the Creator
who killed the illustrious king Jaitrasiṃha![52]

The accusation of Fate as the cause of misfortune has been brought up earlier, namely in Pṛthvīrāja's story where we read in 3.65 that this Chauhan king was captured by the Śaka king Shahabuddin "on account of Fate's playful gestures" (*vidhi-vilasita-yogād*), or

[50] mad-vaṃśa-pāthoruha-rājahaṃsas tais tair guṇair viśva-kṛta-praśaṃsaḥ |
saṃsevyamāno 'ham iva prasāda-dānaiḥ sadânandayitâiṣa yuṣmān ||8.114||

[51] *Raghuvaṃśa*, 8.45-52.

[52] hutāśanâsajjana-kāla-kūṭān paraṃ-tapôrjīn iti ko vyadhatta |
śrī-jaitrasiṃha-nṛpatiṃ praṇighnann ajāyatâsyôttaram adya vedhāḥ ||8.120||

translating *yogād* differently, "*through his control* of Fate's playful gestures".[53] This is just like Jalaluddin killed the reckless Vīranārāyaṇa through his "control of poison" (*viṣa-yogena*, 4.104). It will also turn up later when Hammīra reaches the long-awaited moment of tragic recognition (the Greek *anagnorisis*) at the end of the penultimate canto, discussed in the next chapter. I argue that Nayacandra in fact intends to confront the notion of fate as a force that strikes unexpectedly, cruelly, without any clear motif. He presents this as the perspective of those who are caught up in delusion (*moha*), clouded by the short-sightedness that accompanies the blinding emotion of sorrow. He will link the topic of fate to the human tendency to avoid personal responsibility, to save one's name and reputation.

Nayacandra is clearly engaging with the complex debate about the notion of fate in relation to the law of karmic justice, which is highly central in Jain literature, where typically every 'unexpected' twist is linked to past actions, as noted by other scholars.[54] It is also not unique to Jain literature. The general idea is that one's fate *is* the accumulation and coming to fruition of one's past actions: we may get what we deserve. Jaitrasiṃha's 'unexpected' death can be said to ensue from his stubborn attitude and tragic choice to give Śrī to Hammīra, excluding his elder brother and the ministers from this decision. HMK shows how people bring up the notion of fate to explain something that only *appears* to have happened unexpectedly, without any reason. But the point throughout HMK, I suggest, is that ultimately, this may be a misunderstanding of how karmic retribution and time really works.[55]

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[53] Glossed by the commentary as *daiva-yogāt.* However, Nayacandra seems to make a distinction between the notion of *daiva* as personal fate, and the idea of an impersonal Creator (*vidhi, dhātṛ,* etc.), who supposedly determines the fates of men without any reason. I discuss this in the next chapter, commenting on Hammīra's moment of tragic hindsight.

[54] As for example noted by Warder (1988: §4271), discussing the famous poem Tilakamañjarī of the Jain poet Dhanapāla: "As we know from other Jaina authors, what is popularly known as 'Fate' and sometimes understood to be Brahmā is in reality the workings out of the results of previous actions of the individuals who experience it. Dhanapāla generally expresses himself in the popular language and freely sprinkles his character's speeches with references to 'Fate'. (...) There is nothing casual or 'chance' (another concept equivalent to 'Fate' in Dhanapāla's view) in this story or in its artistic presentation. All these surprising adventures belong to a single fabric and if any detail were cut, so to say, the whole would unravel."

[55] Cf. with Barbara Miller's observation (1967: xxii) in the preface to the translation of Bhartṛhari's poetry, explaining that "[p]opular tradition pays lip-service to the doctrine of *karma,* but turns to a notion of fate to provide a more ready explanation for the apparent absurdity with which *karma* expresses itself in the world. The concept of fate as it appears scattered through the *Śatakas* does not impair the validity of *karma,* it operates on a different level: fate does not have the cosmic significance that *karma* does. It is invoked to explain the irrationality and confusion of events in the life of a man in society, frustrated by the pursuit of worldly gain and concerned only with immediate results. He need not blame his own actions for this present state; he has recourse to the belief that his destiny was written on his forehead, having been traced there at the beginning of birth by a creator-god who acts by mere caprice. " And, on the same page:

Jaitrasiṃha's death brings us back to the atmosphere of the beginning of the canto. If the opening *suprabhātam*, as I argued, was actually meant to awaken king Jaitrasiṃha before handing over the burden of kingship to one of his sons, then the concluding part is meant to awaken Hammīra, whose self is caught up in delusion. We soon learn in verse 8.124 about an intervention by some wise men in Hammīra's court, Viprabījāditya[56] and others, who are "excellent among those who understand ultimate reality" (*brahma-vidāṃ vareṇyaiḥ*). Like sailors they try to pull Hammīra's mind out of his ocean of sorrow. Another important detail: they try to uplift Hammīra *for the good of the people* (*janatā-hitāya*), just like earlier in Vāgbhaṭa's story (see the previous chapter, 2.4). They start their exposition by making clear that death is the unescapable nature of things. Does Hammīra not see that everyone's father dies (8.125)? To be alive is already a great wonder, for the breath of life is fickle (*taralaṃ*) like the wind (8.126). These verses are again reminiscent of Aja's ministers who similarly try to console the prince and remove his sorrow.[57] In HMK they set the tone for the subsequent wake-up call about the 'delusional gestures' of Time (8.128). We can understand the following set of verses as resuming the message of the *suprabhātam* with which the eighth canto started. And along with the meaningful change of meter (to *vasanta-tilaka,* "the ornament of spring" which is *the suprabhātam* meter)- the degenerative process of Time is (finally) explicitly introduced. Let me start with the first verse.

With his sweet and charming cooing sounds
how long will this goose play here
in this pond-like body?
The water of life
being drunk by a row of buckets
from the waterwheel of time
dries up at once
because of it![58]

"[D]eluded by the world (...) [man] cannot understand the real meaning of time and his own absurd position in existence."

[56] Interestingly, this Viprabījāditya is mentioned as the author of an inscription during Hammīra's reign, see Sharma 1975: 115. Otherwise he is not well-known. Nayacandra seems to show his in-depth knowledge of Hammīra's reign by infusing the poem with such details.

[57] *Raghuvaṃśa* 8.83-90.

[58] krīḍāṃ kariṣyati kiyac ciram eṣa haṃsaḥ
snigdhôllasat-kala-ravo 'tra śarīra-vāpyām |
kālâraghaṭṭa-ghaṭikâvali-pīyamāna-
m-āyur-jalaṃ jhagiti śoṣam upaîti yasmāt ||8.127||

This verse requires some unpacking. There's again a sting to it, directed at the babbling king Hammīra, who has to wake up from his delusional sorrow. From a thematic perspective it makes a point about the degenerative nature of time. Or rather about the wheel of time (*kāla-cakra*), its rotating movement, imagined here as the wheel in a well, scooping up the water in a pond. It is just a matter of time – literally – before this wheel will exhaust the pond's water. The goose, namely the king as the soul of the pond-like body, which is the kingdom, will no longer be able to play when the pond is dry, or when the king's life sap has desiccated. This imagery appears to dig at Hammīra's 'cooing'. Earlier we read how Hammīra's throat was becoming dry (*śuṣyad-galasya)* due to the repetitive cries "my dear father, my dear father" (*tātêti tātêti*, 8.118). This verse seems to implicitly compare the king's meaningless laments to the sweet and charming, but unintelligible, chirping or cooing (*kala-rava*) of a goose, playing in the water. Three verses later the poet picks this up again, saying that the king should give up the meaningless "babble" (*man-mana-bhāṣitāni*) of childhood, which is no longer charming (8.130). There is no time for babbling. The Splendor of the kingdom or dynasty, which is repeatedly compared to a (lotus-) pond, is in danger of waning or drying up when ruled by a deluded king.

The first verse from this *suprabhātam*-like set of verses might be asking something like this: how long will you - the new king - be able to rule, enjoy and maintain the kingdom's fortune – that is 'play in the water' - when you are just babbling like a child? You are therefore very much unlike the ideal of the goose (*haṃsa*), who is able to distinguish *sat* from *a-sat,* good from bad, truth from falsehood, reality from illusion.[59] There is no time for your delusional laments, through which not only your throat is becoming dry, but also the kingdom's Fortune! Be more like a real royal goose to the kingdom: this is after all what your father told us you are, when explaining that our fortunes will be safe under your reign (in 8.114). Of course, the audience knows the real answer to the rhetorical question how long (*kiyac ciram*) Hammīra will rule/play: not very long – perhaps echoing what Jaitrasiṃha said earlier when he said that Hammīra will shine "soon" or "not long" (*a-cireṇa*).

From a more poetic perspective, this verse is not only 'about' the desiccating effect of time on the kingdom's fortune, when ruled by a king whose self is caught by delusion (8.117). It tries to make audible what it says. This is especially evident in the last two lines about the wheel of time, where we might be able to hear the gradual slowing down of Time's life-giving pulse. When read aloud the compound *kālâraghaṭṭa-ghaṭikâvali* "the string of buckets from the waterwheel of time" effectively makes audible the 'rattling

[59] The verse thus reminds us again of Hammīra's own earlier prediction that his kingship will produce dark stains (kalaṅka), when he would desire to become the goose of the kingdom, who discerns between what is good and bad for the kingdom (sad-asad-viveka-kṛd rājyahaṃsatvam, 8.52).

sound' of the rotative mechanism of the waterwheel (*ara-ghaṭṭa*), or indeed the spokes (*ara*) of the wheel of time. The harmonious succession of hard guttural syllables - *kā-gha-gha-kā* -with the intermediate *ra-ṭa-ṭi* clearly enacts the rhythmic sound of what it describes. In the final line we might hear a slowing down of this rhythm. The compound "life-water" *āyur-jalam* - really something like the life-giving fluid running through the veins of the kingdom, in constant danger of drying up - appears to pulsate briefly in the word for "instantly" *jhagiti*, which otherwise doesn't appear frequently in the poem - but it appears again two verses later. Together the alliterating words *jalaṃ jhaghiti* clearly echo the preceding rattling rhythm of the wheel of time. The 'beat' heard in the onomatopoeic *jhag-iti* ("with a *jhag*") fittingly stops before the word "draught" (*śoṣam*). In other words, Time's pulsation in the word *jhagiti* "instantly" *is* the alarming wake-up call, shouting something like: 'Quickly! Because (*yasmāt*) of your delusional talk, the Fortune of the kingdom is losing its (or her) pulse at once!

The more explicit 'wake up!' comes in the next verse (which switches to the *śikhariṇī* meter):

> This night of Illusion is deeply dark.
> Through her playful gestures of delusion
> the people are made ignorant.
> Therefore, oh people in this world:
> wake up completely!
> Is it not so that this invisible one
> this dark thief – Time –
> roams around in this world, everyday
> to take away the lives of beings as booty?[60]

This verse explicitly urges the people - the new king Hammīra, and the reader - to wake up from ignorance. We may read the whole verse, on the surface, as a means to console Hammīra, who has just lost his father. This is just how the world works. Time takes away *everyone.* It's important to keep in mind, however, that these verses are presented as a response to Hammīra's accusation of Fate's capriciousness. Is Time, then, the new scapegoat, presented here as a invisible force, a dark thief (*kālaś cauro*) who steals away the lives of people as booty, without any reason? This verse indeed seems to indicate that Time is the dark principle behind that fatal state of delusion (*moha*), haunting everyone in this world (especially the Chauhan warrior-kings). But I believe that the point of the

[60] iyaṃ māyā-rātrir bahala-timirā moha-lalitaiḥ
kṛtâjñānā lokās tad iha nipuṇaṃ jāgrata janāḥ |
alakṣyaḥ saṃhartuṃ nanu tanu-bhṛtāṃ jīvita-dhanā-
ny ayaṃ kālaś cauro bhramati bhuvanântaḥ prati-dinam ||8.128||

verse is that people should try to not get fooled by Time's movements. Time, indeed, operates through the creative power of illusion *māyā,* or enables her playful gestures of delusion (*moha-lalita*). Thus, for lovers, a long night appears to pass in an instant; or at twilight the moon and sun appear to take the same form. Unfortunately, it is through such tricks that Time makes the people fatally confused. Like the great *māyāvin* Viṣṇu, Time is a trickster. The verse thus urges us to wake up completely or "in a clever way" (*nipuṇam*), if we want to see through Time's deceit, and perhaps even appreciate it. Time is the invisible force that allows the deceptive and playful power of Illusion (*māyā*) to do her work.

We may also wonder whether in this verse Time (*kāla*) and its close associate, Illusion (*māyā*), signify the dark opposite of that energizing, light principle of Śrī? I believe the verse suggests that this might just be an illusion. It purposefully puts the point about Time's darkness in the form of a question: isn't it so (*nanu*) that Time is like a thief? We have seen in the previous suprabhātam that Time is indeed also the principle that bestows beauty and Śrī. In fact, a variant of the first part of the verse in an older manuscript, may support this interpretation. It is also much more subtle and playful. It has *ogha* "flood, flow" (typically associated with the "influx" of mental delusions) instead of *moha* ("delusion"), and *kṛta-jñānā* "made wise" instead of *kṛtâjñānā* "made ignorant". Importantly, in this construction, the compound *bahala-timirā* "deeply dark" must be plural (*-āḥ* without *sandhi*) and thus qualifies the people or men (*lokās*). It makes:

> This night of Illusion...
> It is through the playful movements of her flow
> that men, covered in deep darkness, get their wisdom.
> Therefore, oh people in this world: wake up completely![61]

The following verse switches to the *māndākrānta* meter. It extends the imagery of Time's dreadful all-consuming force. It explains first how Rāma displayed his splendor in killing (*nidhana-rucinā*) Rāvaṇa, and his many *rākṣasas* (demons). By Rāma they "were thrown in the mouth of Death"(*kṣip**tās tās tāḥ** pitṛ-pati mukhe*). In this verse the drum of death or Time makes itself powerfully audible: within the game like logic of life, we are repeatedly *thrown, thrown, thrown* by Time. Then the verse goes on to say that in fact even Rāma, "whose image is fading" (*tāmyan-mūrtir*) was "instantly swallowed" (*jhagiti gilitaḥ*) by the dreadful mouth of the Nightwalker Time (*kāla-naktaṃ-careṇa*), which roars day and night. Importantly, Time not only 'swallows' people, or throws them in his dreadful mouth, but

[61] iyaṃ māyā-rātrir bahala-timirā ogha-lalitaiḥ
kṛta-jñānā lokās tad iha nipuṇaṃ jāgrata janāḥ |8.128 a *(variant reading)*

also makes the splendor of their idols or images (*mūrti)* on earth – as statues or memories – *fade.*

The final verse from the minister's speech, switching to the *śārdūlavikrīḍita* meter, leaves out the explicit mention of Time but reintroduces the related topic of fame. It nudges Hammīra to leave behind the idle talk of childhood and adolescence, which used to please his father when he was still alive. Now, however, he can satisfy his father – who is in heaven - *with his fame alone*, sipped in through the songs of the divine nymphs, the *apsaras* (*yaśasaîva tṛptir amarī-gītena pītena,* 8.130). As indicated earlier, the topic of fame is crucial. In an important sense, this is indeed what is only or really at stake from the perspective of the tragic hero, who is fated to lose Royal Fortune. He must try to save his name by *actively* confronting his tragic fate. And he must do this by waking up completely.

At this moment in the poem it looks like the ministers' poetic intervention has the desired effect. In the final verse (8.131) we learn that Hammīra's mind was awakened (*prabuddhâśayaḥ*). He manages to spread forth a "heroic discernment" (*vīram vivekam*) in order to split open the enemy army of sorrow. And as an ideal king he "protected the earth-surface as if it was his own house" (*veśmêva svam apālayat kṣiti-talaṃ,* 8.141). This last verse is yet another allusion to a description of the ideal kingship of the Raghu dynasty in the first canto of Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa*.[62] The ideal is restored. Hammīra, the new Chauhan king, can enter the ninth canto as the true royal goose (*haṃsa*) of the kingdom, endowed with the quintessential royal quality of *viveka,* right judgement.

The reader of course knows that it will be only a matter of time – that seems to be the whole point of the eighth canto– before Fortune will completely fade out under Hammīra's kingship. After all, this single verse – which may sound 'just' as an intertextual nod - doesn't have the power to make the reader forget the deeply ominous tone of the whole eighth canto. We know that the Chauhan dynasty is bound to perish completely; that mental darkness will enter the king's eyes; that Hammīra's kingship will bring along many stains (*kalaṅka*) (of blame?). What will remain, of course, is an image (*mūrti*) of Hammīra, a story of fame (or blame), transmitted and preserved in memory through narratives like Nayacandra's own poem.

Unfortunately for Hammīra's remembrance, in Nayacandra's epic the pursuit of Fortune aligns with the acquisition of fame.[63] Or put differently, with the waning of Śrī's brilliance, the whiteness of fame is bound to fade too or turn into infamy. And

[62] *Raghuvaṃśa* 1.30. I thank Vidwan H.V. Nagaraja Rao for noticing this allusion.

[63] In this regard, the insight of the *arthântara-nyāsa* concluding Harirāja's unheroic death is instructive: (*bhāvinī yādṛśī kīrtir matiḥ syāt tādṛśī nṛṇām*, 4.19, discussed earlier in chapter two). The verse may suggest that we should evaluate the fame of heroes according to their disposition of mind (*matiḥ*), their way of looking at things, and how a distortion of vision or misplaced attention, not only potentially destroys themselves, but also the entire kingdom and its subjects.

importantly, blaming Fate/the Creator as the cause of defeat (*vināśa-hetu*) to escape responsibility and blame is the delusional perspective of those affected by the emotional intensity or shock of sorrow.[64] The real cause of destruction (*vināśa-hetuḥ*) - a concern repeated throughout the poem – may be found in the Chauhans' confrontation with and conception of Time, the invisible force that manifests itself everywhere, in sleeping and waking, remembering and forgetting, attention and carelessness, etc. – all the things Hammīra's father explained to him (and us). But we know that Hammīra, like his predecessors, will slumber into sleep and oblivion.

3.6 Conclusion

Given the poem's structure and framing as a linear movement from past to present, which runs parallel with the swinging shifts in (or of) Fortune, it is worth reading HMK as an 'essay' on the elusive topic of time (*kāla*). Especially because Nayacandra is constantly engaging with other literary works that are deeply expressive of such concerns, like the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*, Kālidāsa's poetry, and story collections like *Pañcatantra*.[65] This chapter has attempted to explore HMK's concern with temporality – and its affinity with notions of fate, fortune and fame–in relation to the poem's tragic plot.

In HMK the linear progression of time seems to have a numbing effect on the Chauhan kings. I have already suggested that this has something to do with the blinding effect of fortune and fame. Strengthened by earlier successes and the belief in their unparalleled martial prowess, the Chauhan heroes fall victim to hubris. They lose control over their horse-like senses, *and their fate*. In this chapter I have tried to link this important theme to Nayacandra's interest in the elusive workings of Time, with the help of David Shulman's analysis of Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa,* one of the major textual models with which

[64] This becomes very clear in the horrifying shock that causes Hammīra's moment of 'insight' about the superior power of Fate, see chapter four, section 4.7.

[65] Especially insightful is the first essay in Shulman's book *The Wisdom of Poets* (1991) on the distinct historical poetics of the two Sanskrit epics. On time in Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa* there is Shulman's article "Waking Aja" (2014), which formed the main inspiration of this chapter. On Kālidāsa's concern with time in his plays, there is Barbara Miller's (1990) insightful essay on Kālidāsa's "theater of memory". She writes about the author's concern to "pierce the boundaries of ordinary space and time" (p. 20) and explains how the plays create a "pattern of alternating tempos and movements" in their introductions (p. 21). About Kālidāsa's aesthetic of memory she writes how "memory has the power to break through the logic of everyday experience – it makes visible what is invisible, obliterates distances, reverses chronologies, and fuses what is ordinarily separate" (p.40-41). Miller also explains how Kālidāsa links the process or remembering to that of awakening, for example to "the painful reality of separation" (p.41).

HMK engages. Although Nayacandra seems to adopt Kālidāsa's use of the meta-poetic device of the *suprabhātam,* the Chauhan protagonists never seem to truly wake up because they never sleep. This partly explains why the canto not only begins with a *suprabhātam* to wake up Jaitrasiṃha and his son Hammīra, but also purposefully ends with another set of verses, which are *suprabhātam*-like in effect. The start of Hammīra's tragedy, in other words, is sandwiched between two explicit wake-up calls. And there will be another poetic intervention by a bard, in the penultimate thirteenth canto, who vainly tries to wake up the sleepless king before his final tragic decision.

Although tragic heroes like Hammīra are of course destined to fulfill their tragic fate, the narrative itself repeatedly opens up moments – temporal gaps, as Shulman identified them in *Raghuvaṃśa* - where the Chauhans are given a chance to alter their fate, to control it. But in HMK they don't take it. Thematically speaking, the fact that they don't take the chance to master their fates, may have less to do with the sense of inevitability that is typical to tragic stories, but with how Nayacandra depicts the heroes' conception of and relation to time. I have suggested earlier that Shahabuddin and Jalaluddin consciously exploit the delusional states of their Chauhan enemies, their various forms of 'sleepiness'. It looks like the Śaka kings, throughout the poem, become more and more *active* as time progresses. They remember past defeats, learn from them, and more generally have a less passive relation to the progress of time than the Chauhan protagonists.

Throughout Nayacandra's poem the Śaka antagonists thus emerge as master players, like Alauddin who doesn't despair but resorts to trickery *kūṭa,* as it were employing time's own deceit (*kāla-kūṭa*) to make Hammīra's general become possessed by the demonic spirit Kali. In fact, as I explain in the next chapter, Alauddin's trickery appears to involve the idea to implant a fatalistic conception of Time into Hammīra's mind, making him believe that there's nothing he can do to prevent the future from happening. For a tragic hero like Hammīra, like his delusional thoughts about Fate in the eighth canto, there is only a passive 'being played' by Time. Like in a gambling match – the imagery to express the degenerative logic of the four ages (*yuga*) - the game of time tends to master the players. Playing is always, partly, a being played, as Georg Gadamer famously put it in his conception of art as play.[66] But one can learn to master the game of fortune. One has to adopt an active and alert attitude towards the uncertainties and elements of chance that determine the course of life, learn from the past, perhaps not unlike Nala in the *Mahābhārata*, who eventually manages to master the dice and reunite with Damayantī.[67]

I want to suggest that Nayacandra purposefully grants Time (*kāla*) the elusive role as the invisible, playful and transformative force which takes all shapes and shapes

[66] Gadamer 2013 [1975]: 111 "[A]ll playing is a being-played. The attraction of a game, the fascination it exerts, consists precisely in the fact that the game masters the players."

[67] See Shulman 1994 for a discussion of this story, and his perceptive analysis of the significance of the dice-game.

everything. It wanders around (*bhramati*) throughout the poem, emerging as the different seasons, the break of dawn, the darkness of night, cycles of sleeping and waking, remembering and forgetting. Its elusive working is also linked to qualities like cleverness and flaws like foolishness, making warriors take course to unthoughtful hasty actions, or to the hero's obsession with future fame. By contrast, we repeatedly learn how the wise characters in the poem do not act in haste, but take time to reflect, to occasionally "let Time pass" (*kāla-kṣepo,* 9.184), in order to avoid doing something stupid with unfortunate consequences.

In the end it is of course Nayacandra, the poet himself, who is the real master of time (and fame) in his poetic world. He will cast Hammīra as the new epitome of sleepy and impotent kingship. Although Nayacandra saved Pṛthvīrāja's name by remaining silent about his major flaws, he will radically transform Hammīra's traditional story by making it resonate powerfully with that of his infamous, sleepy predecessor. The nature of Hammīra's fate and fame lies in the hands of our poet. He is like the "alchemist/yogi of Time" (*kāla-yogin,* 13.145) in one of Nayacandra's own *suprabhātam* verses in the penultimate canto. He purposefully melts stories and memories together to create a new and extraordinary new poetic blend, a life-giving elixir (*rāsāyanam*) in the words of a later copyist of HMK, demanding a new engagement with the well-known story of a popular hero.[68]

[68] I elaborate on this point in the first section of the conclusion to this dissertation, where I translate and briefly discuss this verse.

Chapter 4 Becoming 'the other': Hammīra's tragedy

4.1 A fool's hindsight: reading for the plot

Fortune (Lakṣmī) gravitates towards eminent men who work hard;
Only cowards say it depends on fate (*daiva*).
Forget about fate and be a man – use your strength! (*ātma-śaktyā*)
Then, if you don't succeed in spite of your efforts, what is there to blame?

(*Hitopadeśa,* prologue v. 31) [1]

Ah! If this ignorance of mine
is engendered by the adversity of fate
then why did you do that?
Or what does it matter,
for indeed the future is not otherwise!

(*Hammīramahākāvya,* 13.166, Hammīra's moment of tragic recognition)[2]

From the ninth canto onwards HMK becomes more story-like. We enter an intricate but intelligible chain of tragic, interconnected events of cause and effect, spread over five cantos (9-13), which eventually culminate in the hero's moment of tragic hindsight. (The last, fourteenth canto will be discussed in the next chapter as a meta-poetic/historic reflection on the emergence of the Hammīra tradition itself.) The outcome is known from

[1] Translation by Judit Törzsök in the Clay Sanskrit Library edition (2007: 69).

[2] prātikūlyād vidher jātā mamêyaṃ yadi durmatiḥ |
āś cakrithâitat tat kiṃ tvaṃ yadvā bhāvyaṃ hi nânyathā ||166||

the outset, hinted at several times: the death of Hammīra, leading to the widowhood of the goddess of fortune Lakṣmī (14.2), *and* the complete destruction of the (once) illustrious Śākambharī line of the Chauhan dynasty. But the chain of events itself may be less clear. We don't read a tragic story – or any well-known, great story - to know how it ends, but to reexperience the whole tragic process anew. We may want to rediscover how the tragic chain is connected, why and how it unfolds, if the tragic outcome could be prevented, who or what is to blame, and whether – despite our familiarity with the plot outcome – it might happen differently than we imagined beforehand.[3] We want to rediscover how or whether the tragic hero confronts or fulfills his fate with courage, bravery, nobility, wisdom – or not. For sure, the story of Hammīra's tragic fate was considered great, exceptional and admirable. But is it really worthy of emulation? Is he an example to be followed or avoided?

Arguably, some of the above questions play a less central role in triumphalist stories which follow - or try to adhere to - the more satisfying narrative logic of the 'good guy wins, bad guy loses' story. This idea of so-called happy endings, in fact, was central to the ethical-aesthetic ideal of Sanskrit poetry (*kāvya*).[4] Tragic story lines, by contrast, complicate our (natural) craving for this satisfying feeling of 'poetic justice'.[5] We want literary characters to get what they deserve - just like in real life we want life to be governed by justice. The law of universal justice expounded by *karma* theory meets this need. And if it doesn't seem to work, when we *appear* to be suddenly, unexpectedly and undeservedly struck by misfortune, we can always blame the capriciousness of Fate, or transfer blame or accountability on something or someone else. HMK can be said to be deeply preoccupied with such troubling, unsettling questions, with teasing out the problem of 'poetic justice' in relation to the tragic heroism of historical heroes, the views and values they seek to defend, and the problem of fate (and good and bad luck).[6]

For my discussion of HMK's plot it is important to elaborate on the concept of 'fate'. Because our familiarity with the tragic plot – everything will eventually lead to death of

[3] This may be especially the case when a poem, like HMK, self-consciously presents itself as a new version (in 14.43). The audience thus expects a familiar set of narrative elements and characters that make up the traditional Hammīra story: the Mongols taking refuge in Ranthambhor, Hammīra's heroic vow, the Sultanate's envoy with an offer for a truce, the treason of Hammīra's two generals, the military skill of Ulugh Khan and the death of Nusrat Khan, the danger of a famine in the Chauhan fort, etc. But depending on the author's vision, these elements can be treated differently, their order changed, or 'traditional' significance radically altered to create subversive effects, as I explain at length in the next chapter.

[4] See Pollock (2001: 222 ff.) for a discussion of this ideal in Sanskrit poetic theory.

[5] On this point I'm highly indebted to Adrian Poole's insightful introduction to (Western) tragedy (2005) where he repeatedly highlights the always recurring problem of blame and guilt in tragic writing, and the many troubling questions that emerge from it relating to the problem of poetic justice.

[6] As I explain in the next chapter, all this, of course, relates to a context, in which such heroes are glorified as historical role models, and perhaps appropriated to legitimate certain political agendas. But our poet may not want to underwrite the ideas represented by famous, celebrated heroes like Hammīra.

the main hero and complete destruction of the kingdom – there's a striking and somewhat unsettling sense of inevitability, which we are constantly reminded of through clues, predictions, ominous imagery, etc. Put differently, everything is already 'fated' from the outset. Therefore, from the tragic hero's perspective there's no real hope or possibility to change the outcome. This doesn't mean that the poem itself presents a 'message' of fatalistic determinism. Quite the contrary, opportunities constantly arise where the protagonists are given a 'chance' to alter their fate, or at least respond to it.

How to make sense of these two seemingly opposed conceptions about the fated nature of events in tragic stories? On the one hand the hero has no choice whatsoever to *change* his fate, and therefore seems to have no real agency, on the other hand the poem is tied together by moments where he is given the opportunity to act and make choices (which will determine his fate). Alf Hiltebeitel's observations on fate in epic stories are instructive in this regard. He speaks of how we can use the complex and highly debated notion of fate (*daiva*) open-endedly. The stories of (epic) tragic heroes imply, in the words of Hiltebeitel "a sort of crystallization of fate":[7]

> the heroes face the conditions that "determine" human existence, that "shape" human destiny. (...) [T]he hero who faces up bravely to the conditions which will bring on his death, is *responding to, or fulfilling, a personal fate*." [8]

This is a useful way to look at what happens throughout HMK. However, the dramatic effect on the reader does not depend on a sense of fulfillment, but on what we can call tragic gaps - or 'temporal gaps' to use Shulman's term.[9] As indicated earlier, such intervals open up regularly in the poem. It is at these moments that the Chauhan kings are given the 'chance' to respond to their personal fate. In this chapter I will highlight how in the story of Hammīra these gaps widen to an extreme, together with the dramatic effect of tragic irony – the irony of fate, as it is often called – which also deepens as the plot progresses.[10] We may note that this important literary effect also depends on experiencing an incongruous gap. Nayacandra thus consciously exploits the unsettling distance between the reader's superior knowledge of the plot and the hero's ignorance of his fate.

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[7] Hiltebeitel 1990: 35

[8] Ibid. emphasis added.

[9] See my discussion in the previous chapter, referring to Shulman 2004: 53. In this regard worthy of note too is how the kaliyuga is indeed imagined to be dreadful in the sense of its 'gaping' (*karāla*), like an open mouth, as implied in 14.4 (*kāle karāle kalau*), and made explicit in 8.129 where Time's dreadful mouth (*ghora-vaktra*) is said to swallow everything.

[10] I discussed this earlier in chapter two, referring to Colebrook 2005: 14-15.

We could say a tragic story like that of Hammīra only appears to revolve around a hero who has no agency, but in fact presents a message quite opposite to the idea of fatalism. It does this by telling a story in which the sleepy protagonists are repeatedly urged to wake up and act wisely - much more than bravely. Unlike the shortsighted characters, the reader is able to oversee the whole complex chain of cause and effect, and witness the tragic conditions that allow Time to 'swallow up' the heroes of the poem. The hero's blindness to his past and future makes him confer blame on the adverse workings of the 'Creator' (*vidhi, dhātṛ, kartṛ*, etc.) who appears to determine his personal fate. In some sense Hammīra is 'fated' to subscribe to a fatalistic idea about the workings of time. His future within the story is, more or less, fixed, and cannot be altered. He will resort to a 'whatever will be, will be' perspective on the course of his life. Importantly, this perspective gets criticized as a passive, 'sleepy' relation to the workings of time. Claiming that the future is fixed is typically raised to justify one's idleness and non-action, as in the passage from *Hitopadeśa* quoted above, which is preceded by an explicit denunciation of the 'whatever will be, will be' perspective on life.[11]

In this chapter I will zoom in on those moments where Hammīra is given the chance to 'actively' respond to his fate. Often, this happens quite literally when Nayacandra makes Hammīra voice the Chauhan king's – typically short-sighted - perspective on the events. I will demonstrate how in Nayacandra's poem Hammīra's legendary bravery and fearlessness is clearly just one aspect of how the Chauhan king fulfills or responds to his fate. In Nayacandra's epic the quality of 'courageousness' (*sattva*) may ultimately only apply to the hero's love for combat and war. I will suggest that Hammīra's traditional (*kila,* 1.9) *sattvic* nature suffers heavy blows in the tragic process.

Instead of emphasizing how the earlier triumph-turned-defeat stories repeat themselves throughout the rest of the poem in ever new variations – as demonstrated earlier – I will highlight the growing tragic intensity of the poem through the lens of gaps, silences, opposing perspectives, paradoxes and troubling questions. It is not only important to be attentive to meaningful details, phrases, episodes that repeat themselves,

[11] V. 29-30 in the prologue. The following translation is from Judit Törzsök in the Clay Sanskrit Library edition, (2007: 69):

> "What is not to happen will never happen,
> and what has to happen will not be otherwise.
> Why don't you use this as an antidote against the poison of worry?"
>
> Some people, unable to act, say such words to justify their idleness. However,
>
> One should not give up one's efforts, even when acknowledging the role of fate; without effort, one cannot obtain oil from sesame seeds.

but also to the significance of characters who are introduced and suddenly left out, or appear to assimilate into someone else. This also happened earlier, for example, with the disappearance of Hammīra's elder brother Suratrāṇa, the "Sultan" and expert in good governance (*naya*), who would have been the better husband to Royal Fortune. Although his name never shows up again, the character of Suratrāṇa might be suggestive of the role played by the 'real' Sultan in his poem, namely Alauddin, who indeed turns out to be a master in the political game of fortune.

I will show how something similar happens in the cantos of Hammīra's tragedy. For example, Hammīra unjustly blinds and castrates his minister "Dharmasiṃha", or "Lion Dharma", after which he gradually assimilates into the mentally blind and de facto impotent Hammīra. The blinded "Lion Dharma" disappears from the narrative as soon as his role is 'finished', but clearly leaves some tragic traces in later cantos. I will suggest that this fading out of characters extends to the equally striking silence about Lady Royal Fortune, *rājya-śrī.* She almost literally appears to fade out from the poem, since the beginning of Hammīra's reign in the ninth canto, from the moment he expresses his longing to obtain Heavenly Fortune (*diva-śrī*), perhaps the 'wrong kind' of Fortune, as I will suggest in the next section.

In addition to exploring Nayacandra's masterful play with silences, I will highlight the importance of being attentive to the constant interplay of opposing perspectives. Similar to my analysis of the constant interplay between eulogistic and tragic modes, it can be useful to see this juxtaposing of perspectives in terms of a game of balance, in which one perspective might outweigh the other. Different truths do not have an equal weight. And to understand the truth value of each perspective we have to be attentive to the tone of the arguments, and how they are contextualized. Some perspectives, for example, are literally uttered in delusion. Similar to how the tragic pole has the effect of hollowing out the idealistic descriptions of the panegyric mode, the perspectives raised by Hammīra's opponents and his own subjects tend to cast a shadow on the Chauhan king's perspective. The reader is invited to evaluate the (truth-)value of all the raised arguments and perspectives.

Let me repeat my view that HMK is a poem about delusions (*moha*) and whirling confusions, the always recurring themes which can be said to structure the poem at every level. Hammīra is cast as someone who repeatedly mistakes friend for foe and vice versa. He insults and mutilates his wise ministers, who will take revenge, and he supports those who act recklessly, without thinking. This fatal tendency, Hammīra's complete lack of discernment (*viveka*), culminates to a point of no return in the tragic chain. Hammīra will fail to recognize that his Mongol refugees are not intrinsically bad or low because of their foreign "otherness" or "hostility" (*paratvam,* 13.143). The whole poem can be said to build up to a scene where the Mongol warrior Mahimāsāhi shocks Hammīra into reaching his long-awaited moment of self-recognition by 'heroically' slaying his own family. It is at

this moment where Mahimāsāhi, the Mongol "other" (*para*) proves his 'exemplary' warriorhood, that Hammīra *becomes* the man he deemed to be a potential enemy "other".

Apart from the Mongol 'other', many other characters appear to assimilate into Hammīra's own character, or become mirror images of the Chauhan king. This includes his favorite general Ratipāla "Protector of (Sexual) Pleasure", who will betray him, or the 'fool' Jāhaḍa, who tries to save the kingdom by lying to the king about the real amount of food stored in the fort. Hammīra will appoint this man as the scapegoat and hold his foolishness responsible for the destruction of his clan. This, at least, is Hammīra's perspective.

This chapter stresses the importance of understanding and appreciating the intricacies of HMK's plot by paying attention to the poem's intriguing play with silences, opposing (waking and sleepy) perspectives, processes of assimilation, inversion and other mirroring effects. The whole tragic process eventually culminates in Hammīra's moment of insight or hindsight about his ignorance (*dur-matir,* or wickedness). From the reader's perspective, however, Hammīra's moment of insight remains the short-sighted vision of a fool, blind to the actual chain of events that set to motion his tragic story. We see through the eyes of a tragic character who tries to avoid responsibility by – once again – blaming the capriciousness of fate, and then, upon the discovery of Jāhaḍa's lie, changes his mind, and points to him as the scapegoat deserving all blame for the destruction of his clan. In short, this chapter shows that the tragic plot is far more complex, interesting and subversive than it is presented in earlier readings of Nayacandra's poem.

4.2 A vow of silence: the first ironic reversal

Although Nayacandra clearly foreshadows the tragic kingship of Hammīra in the previous cantos, we enter canto nine – the first canto devoted to Hammīra's rule - with a grain of hope. The canto is somewhat deceivingly titled "the description of Hammīra's world conquest" (*hammīradeva-digvijaya-varṇano*)[12]. Its thematic significance, however, clearly does not lie in describing Hammīra's victories. Indeed, only the first half of the canto is concerned with Hammīra's world conquest and the customary celebratory ceremonies after it. And it is *only* in this part where Hammīra emerges as a highly successful and ideal

[12] The cantos are always titled at the end.

ruler.[13] The overall pattern remains similar to the stories of his predecessors: a body of heroic praise anticipates a tragic turn after which we gradually enter the actualized, more tragic narrative of his far from ideal kingship.

The move from an idealistic to a tragic mode – and its ironic reversal – does happen somewhat differently. The preceding triumphant part is described with such a geographical precision and other details that it prevents the panegyric mode from completely losing its content value. The closer we come to the present, it seems, the more detailed the narrative becomes. But I would argue that it is precisely the geographical precision that carries the tragic sense and makes a point about Hammīra's blind spot. By describing Hammīra's *dig-vijaya* – a world conquest in the four cardinal directions (*dig*) – as taking place only in the south of the Chauhan kingdom (from Dhara, to Ujjain, to Chittor, to Mount Abu and back), the first triumphant part makes audible the limited scope of his 'world conquest'. We can almost hear the deafening silence about the geographical direction where the real threat is coming from, namely Delhi, north of the Chauhan kingdom, as it did in the previous cantos. Therefore, much like the idealistic descriptions in these cantos, the triumphant part about Hammīra's successful but tragically incomplete *dig-vijaya* builds up dramatic suspense.

The eulogistic tone eventually "thickens" to an almost unbearable and illusory extreme about the unique, unsurpassed greatness of Hammīra, expressed in three verses, with double-entendres, playing with the figure of style called *virodhâbhāsa,* "semblance of contradiction", or paradox.[14] In verse 9.73 we learn that Hammīra, even though he obtained the condition of the one who is 'imperishable' or 'un-shaking' (*acyuta-sthitir apy*), a name for Kṛṣṇa/Viṣṇu, never became a "tormenter of men" (*janârdanaḥ*), another name of the Hindu god. It is only Viṣṇu's unambiguously positive epithet that applies to Hammīra. The next verse (9.74) says that *even* those threefold ends of men – *dharma, artha, kāma* – (*dharmârtha-kāmâkhyāh puruṣârthās trayo 'py amī*) served him at the right time and with the proper control (*yathā-yogam*). The idea here revolves around the difficulty or impossibility of the theoretical ideal that men should combine these aims harmoniously. In normal circumstances men only try to - and usually fail at - cultivating or 'serving' these aims.[15] But the verse imagines that in the extraordinary case of Hammīra's ideal

[13] As explained in the introduction (section 1.4), it is to this part that Ramya Sreenivasan (2002: 287-8) refers when making her claim about the 'legitimizing' function of Nayacandra's poem through the idealization of Hammīra's kingship.

[14] On poetic embellishments as "thickening" see Bronner (2010: 471), showing how in Bilhaṇa's *Vikramâṅkadevacarita* the panegyric frame sometimes "collapses under its own weight".

[15] On the *puruṣârthas* and humor, see Siegel 1987: 73-4; and Davis 2004. Nayacandra's poem follows the trend in Indian literature to exploit the gap between the ideal of the threefold pursuits of human life and how they are actually pursued. Despite the lack of uniformity about its wide sphere of meanings, poets often treat the concept of the *puruṣârthas* with some humor which is most likely precisely because of the non-

kingship, these aims themselves – which otherwise cause trouble – serve Hammīra, and not the other way around. The final verse (9.75) before the transitional moment compares the extraordinary state of the kingdom to the playful/ shining (*vilasat*) and auspicious Śiva (*maheśvaro*). Although the people (*jano*) were like Śiva (the poison-eater *viṣa-ādin*), what a wonder it was that they were not in despair (*viṣādin*). The verse plays upon the dual meaning of the word *viṣādin* as "in despair" and "poison-eater", thus referring to Śiva in his role at the churning of the ocean when he swallowed the *kāla-kūṭa* poison, the "trick of time".

But these verses only signal the inevitable inversion of the ideal they seek to praise, in the very same canto: Hammīra will not remain *a-cyuta* "imperishable" or "un-shaken", but he will become a *janârdana,* "tormenter of men"; his pursuit of the *puruṣârthas* will not serve him, precisely because *dharma, artha and kāma* are cultivated at the wrong moment and in an unbalanced way.[16] And accordingly, the people of the kingdom will turn to despair. Even though in the triumphalist part Hammīra is thus described as an ideal king, who even during his military conquests didn't acquire sin - his Self was spotless (*vimalâtmā, 9.34*) when worshipping the temple of Ṛṣabha at Mount Abu - the reader knows that kings, even those elevated as ideals, never remain spotless. Especially in light of the inevitable tragic plot, the ideal mode remains fragile, and perhaps only illusory.

It is indeed right after the panegyric mode thickens to an extreme in the three concluding paradoxes mentioned above (*9.72-75*), that we can feel the tragic transition, announced by the time marker *anyedyuḥ,* "the other day" (9.76). On this fateful day Hammīra asks his sacrificial priest about the "fruit of the sacrifice of crores" (*koṭi-yajña-phalaṃ*). His clever priest (*paṭuḥ* 9.76, or "cunning") explains to Hammīra that a king who has conquered the earth with the strength of his arms "may become a vessel of pleasure for the Fortunes of the third heaven" (*nṛpaḥ prīti-pātraṃ syāt tri-diva-śriyām*, 9.77). Longing to achieve this, Hammīra has the brahmins carry out this sacrifice of crores (*koṭi-yajña*), during which Hammīra indeed exhausts the entire royal treasury, giving away crores of gold and land to the brahmins - or "gods on earth" (*bhū-devebhyo*, 9.93) - to the point that the king reaches the condition of a beggar (9.95). We learn that the actual gods (*nirjarā,*

uniformity and paradoxical meanings inherent to this conceptual scheme. In her discussion of Kālidāsa's plays Barabara Miller refers to it as the "Indian scheme for reconciling life's multiple possibilities" (Miller 1984: 27). Implicitly countering the pejorative Western evaluation about the so-called 'impersonality' of Sanskrit poetry and the absence of 'tragedy', she states that "Kālidāsa's dramas achieve their aesthetic and moral impact not through the conflicts of individuals but through the perennial human conflict between duty (*dharma*) and desire (*kāma*)" (p.27). Being human, a *puruṣa*, means to navigate through and struggle with the spheres of *kāma, artha* and *dharma*

[16] Thus, Hammīra' subsequent act of *dharma* – a sacrificial rite to cleanse the king of the sinful deeds of his military conquests - is presented not only as rooted in pleasure (*kāma*) - his desire to have sexual pleasure in heaven - but also as the right moment for Alauddin to attack him.

"those who don't age") gave up their games at the play-ground of (the golden) Mount Meru (*meru-krīḍa-krīḍā-madaṃ*, 9.94) to behold the brahmins dance on their piles (*kūṭeṣu,* or their "tricks") of gold given away by the king.[17] In the final verse of the triumphant part we learn that the pleased or satisfied (*prīto*) Hammīra completes his sacrifice with a vow of silence (*muni-vratam,* or the "monk's vow", 9.99), which he has to observe for one month.

It is immediately after announcing the king's vow of silence that the poem in fact breaks the silence about the felt incompleteness of Hammīra's 'world conquest' which took place only south of the Chauhan kingdom. The designation of the king as *prīta* "pleased, happy, satisfied" contrasts sharply with the subsequent introduction of Alauddin, "the foremost Śaka, residing in Delhi which is the arrow in the heart of its enemies" (*śatru-hṛd-bhallayām dillyāṃ śaka-matallikā,* 9.100) and his brother Ulugh Khan, who is presented as "the only conqueror of the world" (*jagad-eka-jit*, 9.101). Quite fittingly, Alauddin complains to his brother Ulugh Khan that Hammīra is 'ignoring' him. Unlike king Jaitrasiṃha who used to pay tribute out of fear for Alauddin's might, his son is greatly arrogant (*akharva-garvavān*): "he doesn't even communicate, let alone pay tribute" (*daṇḍam dūrata evâstu na vākyam api yacchati*, 9.103). Alauddin says that he was previously unable to conquer Hammīra because of his strength, but that now, because of his adherence to his vow, he can be conquered easily, without effort, in mere play (*līlayâiva*, 9.104). Interestingly, Hammīra's vow of silence is presented as an opportunity to attack the Chauhan king: what for Hammīra signifies the completion of his conquests, signals the chance or opportunity for his enemy to send forth a punitive raid.

Like in the traditional Hammīra legend the conflict thus takes off with a vow. Curiously, not with a heroic vow of offering protection (like in Pṛthvīrāja's story in canto three), but with the monk's vow (*muni-vrata*), a vow of silence, which he observes for a month as an addition to the celebratory sacrifice which made Hammīra exhaust the entire state treasury.

Why this different framing, and what is its effect? There are clearly both intertextual and historical motivations for having Hammīra's tragedy start with the performance of a wealth-consuming sacrifice. As with the pretext to Pṛthvīrāja's tragic story, which was framed as a variation of the second canto of Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava*, this episode clearly resonates with Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa*, where king Raghu similarly wastes away

[17] In such verses the reader too is given a god-like distant scope. Looking down at the Chauhan king's attitude toward the game-like nature of royal power, we become aware of what Hammīra doesn't see yet, namely that his wealth-consuming sacrifice - which he completes with a vow of silence (9.96) - already contains the seed of several later problems. We get the sense that both the brahmins and Hammīra are subtly critiqued. The dancing brahmins on their piles of gold for their greed and the Chauhan king for his decision to exchange the entire treasury for the promise of heavenly pleasure.

the entire royal treasure in his *viśva-jit* sacrifice after having just conquered the whole world.[18] In Kālidāsa's work Raghu's sacrifice opens up the first of many problems in the long history of the Raghu dynasty, introducing, in Shulman's reading of the text, the first alternation of modes of emptiness and fullness.[19] Here too the episode of emptying out the treasury seems to anticipate the problem the 'overly generous' Hammīra later faces in the same canto, when a blinding greed makes him (re)fill the state treasury by tormenting his subjects with heavy taxes. This is quite unlike the more heroic solution of king Raghu who strides with his army to the god of wealth Kubera and receives a million pieces of gold (5.27-31). Interestingly, there also seems to be a historical basis for having the conflict take off after Hammīra's sacrifice. An inscription during Hammīra's rule from 1288 CE mentions that Hammīra had performed not one, but two *koṭi-yajñas,* perhaps indeed to celebrate his victory against the ruler of Malwa named Arjuna.[20] This is also mentioned as the first victory in Nayacandra's description of Hammīra's *digvijaya* (9.16). Intertextual modeling and historical facts may go together.

For the argument of this chapter, I want to highlight how Nayacandra is deliberately building up several ironies by having Hammīra's tragically incomplete world conquest culminate in the Chauhan king's celebratory sacrifice and vow of silence. Nominally or theoretically speaking, these rites are meant to purify the 'sin' acquired in war and satisfy Hammīra's wish to become a vessel of pleasure or satisfaction (*prīti-pātra*) for Heavenly Fortune (*diva-śrī*), which is indeed the traditional 'fruit' (*phalam,* 9.76) of a sacrificial ceremony. But in the narrative logic of Nayacandra's poem this episode marks the coming to fruition of Hammīra's fatal neglect of his symbolic wife Royal Fortune (*rājya-śrī*), who from this moment indeed will gradually disappear from Hammīra's vision.

It might not be a coincidence that in the penultimate canto, when describing the final battle, his younger brother Vīrama comments on Hammīra's desire to marry Heavenly Fortune - perhaps, instead of trying to consolidate his marriage with Royal Fortune.

> "What is She like, that Splendor of Heaven, whom the king wishes to marry?"
> With these thoughts, Vīrama went to heaven before the king, as if to find out.
> Other heroic commanders (*hammīras*) too, as if they were disgusted with life,
> went to heaven before their lord. Such is the condition of warriors.[21]

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[18] in verse 4.86, in the edition of Kale 2014.

[19] Shulman 2014: 36.

[20] The two sacrifices are mentioned in the Balwan inscription of 1288 CE describing how Hammīra had "forcefully" (*haṭhena*) subdued the ruler of Malwa, named Arjuna, in verse 11 (printed on p. 104 in Nahata's 1960 edition of Bhandau Vyas' *Hammīrāyaṇa*).

[21] sā kīdṛg asti svaḥ-śrīryāṃ nṛpaḥ pariṇinīṣate |
iti drṣṭum ivâyāsīd vīramaḥ prāg nṛpād divam ||207||
vīrāḥ pare 'pi hammīrā nirviṇṇā iva jīvite |

The question "what is She like", that Śrī of heaven, may in fact sound like "where is Royal Fortune" (*rājya-śrī*), his most important symbolic wife, who has been absent from Hammīra's attention, ever since the Chauhan king expressed his wish to become a 'vessel of pleasure' for the Fortunes of the third heaven (*prīti-pātraṃ tri-diva-śriyām,* 9.77). Of course, the longing for heavenly bliss is not an unworthy pursuit for kings. Especially for the valiant warrior (*kṣatriya*) it is the well-deserved and much-desired reward for fighting bravely and dying in battle.[22] However, in HMK this desire appears to go at the cost of the king's attention for his wife Royal Fortune. And it derives, as the above verse suggests from the hero's general disgust (*nirviṇṇā*) with life (13.208).

Hammīra's tragic story seems purposefully enclosed by two statements about Hammīra's longing to 'marry' Fortune of heaven (*diva-śrī*) – perhaps the wrong Śrī. This kind of subtle mockery may not have been uncommon.[23] From the perspective of Hammīra's jealous queens, this is indeed presented as a greedy (*lubdha,* 13.184) longing for erotic pleasure with the divine nymphs (apsaras). Their gold-rivaling beauty overpowers the king (*vaśī-kṛti,* 13.186*).* Such subtle and humorous stings continue in the final canto, which deplores the death of Hammīra, praising him in hyperbolic terms as the greatest king of the present age. One verse thus grieves that all the essential royal qualities, like stability (*dhairya*), vanished from earth "when Hammīra's eyes stumbled down the big mountain-breasts of the beautiful apsarases" (*hammīre surasundarī-stana-mahā-śaila-skhalac-cakṣuṣi*, 14.6).[24] The problem throughout HMK is precisely that Hammīra's eyes are always 'tottering' elsewhere.

Apart from introducing a shift in Hammīra's attention, the episode of Hammīra's sacrifice subtly reintroduces the topic of untimely and misplaced celebrations. We're invited to think, together with Alauddin, why the very arrogant Hammīra ignores the presence of the Delhi Sultanate, the dominant power in the region. Instead, he's celebrating his victories against rulers he'd perhaps better made an alliance with.[25] Moreover, Hammīra's vow of silence seems to ironically signal the problem with his way of communication, as Alauddin observed. We are explicitly told that it is meant to bring

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prabhoḥ pūrvaṃ yayuḥ svargaṃ sthitir eṣā bhujābhṛtām ||208||

[22] See Hara's article "Apsaras and Hero" (2001) for a discussion of this topic.

[23] The point about paying attention to the 'wrong' Śrī seems to find a parallel in a nineteenth century historical *kāvya* discussed in Rao et al. *Textures of Time* (2001: 89), where the losing king appears to dress himself up for *mokṣa-lakṣmī*, "the Splendor of liberation", instead of his bride *jaya-lakṣmī,* "Splendor of victory".

[24] See chapter five for a more elaborate discussion of this canto as deeply ironic lamentation, in section 5.6.

[25] This critique clearly occurs in the *prabandhas* of the rivalling Jayacandra and Pṛthvīrāja who were both defeated by Shahabuddin. It might be implicit here, as in Nayacandra's other work *Rambhāmañjarī.* I elaborate on these points in the last chapter.

about a threefold purification (*tri-śuddhi*, 9.110), typically of mind, body and speech. Ironically then, after completing his vow of silence, as I explain in the next section, Hammīra's first words are violent outbursts of misplaced anger, leading to the unjust castration and blinding of his wise minister Dharmasiṃha, "Lion Dharma". It is this public humiliation, right after Hammīra has fulfilled his vow (*pūrṇa-vrato,* 9.151), that will set in motion the entire chain of events that lead to Hammīra's downfall.

Worthy of note is how in Pṛthvīrāja's story too, the first triumphant part of the third canto culminated in the fulfillment of his heroic promise (*apūpurat svāṃ...pratijñām*, 3.43). As there, the sense of fulfilment here, emphasized by the king's state of satisfaction (*prīto*) marks the inevitable reversal, the emptying out of the preceding ideal. And like his infamous predecessor, Hammīra will remain blind to his role in the largely self-induced tragic process. Nayacandra deliberately exploits the irony of the reversal.

This is the recurrent ironic logic I've been trying to hint at: a vow of silence - instead of its intended purifying effect - *signals* Hammīra's fatal tendency to speak abusive and destructive language, and to silence others;[26] a celebration of victory literally signals the subsequent defeat;[27] Hammīra's cruel blinding of one of ministers signals his own mental blindness; the punishment of castration signals Hammīra's own impotence, etc. I will make this pattern clear in the next section. As indicated earlier, such ironic reversals reiterate themselves consistently as replications of the triumph-turned-defeat story of Pṛthvīrāja, resonating throughout the poem in ever new variations.

4.3 Dharmasiṃha's revenge: blindness and impotence reversed

At the heart of the ninth canto is not so much the description of Hammīra's world conquest, as its title seems to indicate, but rather the theme of tragic blindness and heroic impotence, told in a story that demonstrates the retributive logic of justice. The celebration of Hammīra's *digvijaya*, culminating in his vow of silence, only forms the prelude to the fascinating story of Hammīra's two high placed officers, Bhīmasiṃha, "Lion

[26] Nayacandra seems to ironically thematize this tendency later in the poem too, when Hammīra 'silences' the speech of his daughter/or queens, while threatening to cut out the tongue of the women who urged her to tell Hammīra to hand her over to the enemy. Hammīra compares her daughter to the vital importance of the 'tongue' as the body's most precious organ. He will never give her to the 'low' Śaka. See my discussion later in this chapter.

[27] As in the story of Bhīmasiṃha "Lion Bhīma", discussed in the next section.

Bhīma" and Dharmasiṃha, "Lion Dharma". Because Hammīra is still engaged in observing his vow of silence, he sends forth these two men to counter Ulugh Khan's punitive raid.

It is obvious to the reader that these characters are fictional, in the sense that they were probably not part of the 'traditional cast' of the Hammīra legend. They serve a symbolic role, something that is overlooked in most readings of Nayacandra's poem. There's a certain predictability about the roles these characters will play due to the *nomen est omen* logic that runs throughout the poem: the meaning of the name already betrays their function within the narrative. Bhīmasiṃha, "Lion Bhīma", like his namesake from the *Mahābhārata*, embodies the fearless warrior, endowed with great virility or heroism (*mahā-vīryas,* 9.111). He is backed up by the great intelligence of Dharmasiṃha (*dharmasiṃha-dhiyôddhuraḥ*, 9.111), "Lion Dharma", whose role might also be reminiscent of the *Mahābhārata* dice game episode where Yudhiṣṭhira, the son of Dharma, stakes and loses the entire kingdom. I elaborate on the significance of this parallel below.

We are invited to recognize the characters of these two 'lions' – *siṃha* being a popular suffix, also used by Nayacandra's Tomar patrons - as embodying 'opposing' qualities: virile Bhīmasiṃha and wise Dharmasiṃha. However, if contained in the same person, they would make that ideal combination of heroic strength and wisdom, through which a ruler attracts and maintains Royal Fortune. This, after all, was the emphasis of Jaitrasiṃha's lecture on kingship.[28] But in Jaitrasiṃha's son Hammīra these qualities remain tragically split and unfortunately opposed.

Worthy of note is that Dharmasiṃha was already introduced earlier in the triumphant part as Hammīra's chief minister (9.52). It is indeed the role of the wise Dharmasiṃha, and the (mutilated) righteousness or order (*dharma*) he represents, that will carry the most weight. And it is the curious disappearance of this character – or his assimilation into Hammīra's own character – that shows the ingeniousness of Nayacandra's play with silence.

The narrative first zooms in on the tragi-comic triumph-turned-defeat story of Bhīmasiṃha. It replicates nearly all the characteristics of earlier versions of this narrative logic, including a hint at the traditional plot of the Hammīra legend and an implicit (and ominous) reference to the famous *Pañcatantra* story of the owls and the crows in the triumphant part. (The explicit mention of this story comes later in the canto, in 9.180). And more powerfully than in any of the earlier stories, it exploits the tragic irony of misplaced joy.[29]

[28] As discussed in the previous chapter.

[29] The story is as follows. We first learn how the Chauhan forces spread confusion (*vyākulī-bhāvaṃ*) in the enemy's camp with the sound of their war drums (9.112). A long description of battle ensues, which culminates in the victory of the Chauhan army. The Śaka warriors face a terrible massacre, a *kāka-nāśam*, "the destruction of the crows" (9.141), which like earlier in Harirāja's story signals a reversal of fortunes (in

Like in Pṛthvīrāja's story, Nayacandra contrasts the fearless but foolishly self-destructive attitude of the Chauhan warriors with the fearful, but more clever enemy. The main charm of the story lies in the sharp irony of the reversal, expressed through the always recurring motif of confusion, misperception, and misplaced joy, which tend to accompany the blinding overconfidence following victory. A story that starts with a description of the Chauhan drums - inspiring a bewildering confusion (*vyākulī-bhāvam,* 9.112) in the enemy camp - transforms into a story where the Chauhan drums of victory – looted from the enemy! – almost literally announce their subsequent defeat. The ironic death of Bhīmasiṃha, "Lion Bhīma", not only resonates with that of the Chauhan kings in the past – like Prahlādana who dies after killing a 'sleeping lion' - but forms the prelude to the more compelling and complex story about his more intelligent, but equally ill-fated symbolic counterpart Dharmasiṃha, "Lion Dharma".

After the death of Bhīmasiṃha, we learn that Hammīra has completed his vow of silence (*pūrṇa-vrato,* 9.151) and 'discovers' what happened, thinking (*matvā*) that Bhīmasiṃha died because of Dharmasiṃha's mind (*dharmasiṃha-matyā*).[30] He summons Dharmasiṃha and utters these fateful words:

"Your two eyes must have been burst,
for you didn't see the powerful Śaka.
And because afterwards you stayed alive yourself
there is no manliness in you."

4.17). We can already feel the tragic shift in the next verses when we learn that Ulugh Khan secretly follows Bhīmasiṃha who had started his return to Ranthambhor (9.143). Moreover, some of his soldiers, deeming themselves victorious (*jitakāśitayā*), abandon their general Bhīmasiṃha, carrying with them the looted treasures. This might be meant as an allusion to the core problem in the Hammīra legend, namely that the Mongols under Hammīra's protection had betrayed their former general Ulugh Khan by running off with the loot (referred to in 10.21 – discussed in chapter five, section 5.4). In any case, it doesn't prevent Bhīmasiṃha from celebrating and announcing his victory, unaware of the fact that he's being followed. Bhīmasiṃha, retreating to a mountain pass, has the looted instruments of the Śakas sound loudly, out of extreme joy (*parayā mudā*, 9.145). This victory cry brings the story of Bhīmasiṃha's 'triumph' to its fatal inversion. The scattered and confused *(bhrāntā*, 9.147) enemy mistakes the victory sounds - spread by the drums looted by the Chauhans - as the signal of their victory. After all, they had agreed to assemble at the spot where their drums would sound victory (9.146). As a result, the enemy warriors reassemble at the mountain pass where the Chauhan celebration is going on. A new battle ensues in which Bhīmasiṃha is killed after putting up a great fight. The reversal is complete: it is now Ulugh Khan who reaches his camp as a victor (*jitakāsī*). He then returns to his own city, "again fearing the warriors" (*bāhujebhyāḥ punar bibhyad*, 9.150).

[30] The syntax of this verse is a bit unclear. It is perhaps deliberately so, fitting to the situation of Hammīra's confusion. The point of importance is that we don't really know anything about the role played by Dharmasiṃha, whether he left Bhīmasiṃha behind or not.

Reproaching him incessantly
with these insults in front of the assembly,
the king had his testicles removed first,
and then his eyes. [31]

Hammīra thus accuses Dharmasiṃha of blindness for not seeing the enemy, and of lacking masculinity (*puṃstvam,* 9.152) for not having died in battle. He then cruelly puts his words into deeds by having him blinded and castrated (9.153). But this public humiliation is acted out without real justification. One act of injustice sets into motion a long tragic chain of karmic retribution. Important to note is that Dharmasiṃha was not mentioned in the story of Bhīmasiṃha. All we know is that it was Bhīmasiṃha himself who failed to see that he was being followed by the yet unconquered Ulugh Khan. We are therefore immediately confronted with the inconsiderate nature of Hammīra's cruel punishment. Hammīra's violent condemnation, marking the end of his vow of silence, indeed reveals his own blind and impotent admiration of the virile but foolish Bhīmasiṃha. Everything that follows the mutilation of Dharmasiṃha seems precisely to make this point of inversion: it is Hammīra who is de facto blind and impotent. And interestingly, Hammīra appears to gradually assimilate with the blinded and impotent Lion Dharma. Instead of only explaining how this assimilation happens, I will give a translation of the remainder of the ninth canto.

Let me first briefly point out that the story of Hammīra's mental blindness and de facto passivity and impotence takes off with the insertion of a new character, another (fictional) "brother" of the Chauhan king, named Bhojadeva, who replaces Dharmasiṃha. In fact, after Dharmasiṃha's curious disappearance from the narrative, this Bhojadeva will actually replace Dharmasiṃha's literary role by resuming the role of the unjustly treated minister, who loses everything he has. Again, the name is probably not a coincidence. It may be intended to evoke the memory of the famous eleventh-century Paramara king Bhojadeva of Dhar (Skt. Dhārā), the great poet-king and patron of arts, who had inspired a flourishing tradition of stories. His tragic fate is alluded to earlier in this canto when Hammīra supposedly conquered Dhārā, where another Bhoja ruled, the namesake of the great Bhoja, whom he caused to wither like a flower (*ambhojam iva*, 9.18).[32]

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[31] sphuṭite tad dṛśau nūnaṃ yan nâdarśi śako balī |
svayaṃ paścād yad asthāsīs tan na puṃstvam api tvayi ||9.152||
sâkrośam ity upālabhyâbhisabhyaṃ bhūpatir muhuḥ |
muṣka-yugmac-chidā-pūrvaṃ tad-drśau niracīkasat ||9.153||

[32] paramārânvaya-prauḍho bhojo bhoja ivâparaḥ |
tatrāmbhojam ivânena rājñā mlānimanīyata ||9.18||

"Bhoja, like the other Bhoja, the foremost of the Paramāra dynasty,

This is exactly what Hammīra will do to his 'brother' Bhojadeva. In support of this reading is that Dharmasiṃha will avenge the inflicted injustice by employing the 'dancing queen' named Dhārā-devī. "Queen of Dhārā" or "Queen of Flow". Here is a translation of the first unit:

> Like Vidura to Pāṇḍu[33], the king had a younger brother, the conqueror named Bhojadeva, who also went by the name of Wielder of Swords.[34] The king, who felt satisfied (*tuṣṭo*), gave Dharmasiṃha's post to him. And he (Bhoja) prevented the king from banishing him from the country.
>
> He returned to his house, keeping secret the enmity caused by that crime. Being an adept in Bharata's treatise (on dance and theater), he instructed Dhārādevī, "Queen of Dhārā" in the art of dance and theater (*nṛtyam*). Under the pretext of dancing (*nṛtya-cchalāt*), he sent her again and again to the assembly of the king. And so, even though remaining at home, he came to know all about the king's affairs.
>
> One day she came back from the royal assembly, with her body and mind in distress. The blind man asked her why, after which she explained the heart-tearing reason of her sadness: "Dear friend, today the king came to know that his horses have died from the *vedha*-disease.[35] My songs, dances, and so on no longer bring joy to him. This is why I'm deeply worried." When he heard this, he told her: "Do not make such vain worries. When you find the right moment, you should request the king the following: "Oh king, if Dharmasiṃha is again appointed in his former post, he will certainly double the amount of the dead horses." "All right", she said, and she returned to the king and told him accordingly. And he, out of greed (*lobhāt*), summoned the blind man (*andham*), and reinstalled him.[36]

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was made to wither by the king as if he were a lotus flower."

[33] Vidura is literally the "wise" younger half-brother of Pāṇḍu, having the same father (Vyāsa) but a different mother. I return to the significance of the *Mahābhārata* parallel later. We might wonder whether Nayacandra is implying that Hammīra is therefore also like Pāṇḍu?

[34] This Bhoja appears to be the same as the warrior and "great swordsman" who died while bravely fighting for the Turkish side in the slightly later vernacular *Kānhaḍade-prabandha* (c. 1455), see p. 35 in translation by Bhatnagar (1991). I elaborate on the likely influence of HMK on this poem in the conclusion of this dissertation.

[35] Apparently a kind of horse disease, which causes "wounds" (*vedha*).

[36] pāṇḍor vidura-vat tasya rājño 'bhūd anujo jayī |
bhojadevâbhidhaḥ khaṅga-grāhīty aparanāma-bhāk ||9.154||
dharmasiṃha-padaṃ tasmai tuṣṭo 'tha pradade nṛpaḥ |
taṃ ca nirvāsayan deśād amunaîva nyaṣidhyata ||9.155||
athâpamānāt so 'bhyetya gupta-vairaḥ sva-mandiram |
adhītī bharate dhārādevīṃ nṛtyam aśikṣayat ||156||
tāṃ ca preśyâniśaṃ nṛtya-cchalāt pārthiva-parṣadi |
veśma-stho 'pi vidām āsa sa sarvāṃ nṛpati-sthitim ||157||
cintā-citâṅgī sā 'nyedyur āgatā nṛpa-parṣadi |
pṛṣṭā 'ndhena jagau cintā-kāraṇaṃ hṛd-vidāraṇam ||158||
tātâdya vedha-rogeṇa mṛtâśva-śravanād vibhoḥ |
prītyai na gīta-nṛtyâdi cintā tenêyam ulvaṇā ||159||
śrutvêty asāv imām āha cintā mā sma kṛthā vṛthā |
taṃ prāptâvasarā kintu pārthivaṃ prārthayer iti ||160||
āsādyate vibho dharmasiṃhaś cet svapadaṃ punaḥ |
mṛtebhyoḥ dviguṇān aśvāṃs tad asāv ānayet dhruvam||161||

Let me briefly pause here and comment on what happened. After the public humiliation of Dharmasiṃha, we learn about his plan of retaliation. Despite the inflicted physical blindness and impotence, Dharmasiṃha doesn't lose the quintessential political skill to employ deceit. Although Nayacandra uses a more unadorned style to present an actualized, darker vision of kingship, the whole episode abounds in ambiguous imagery. Like Pṛthvīrāja's dancing horse, Hammīra doesn't manage to see through a "trick" (*chala*) involving 'someone' named "Queen of Dhārā" – a nod to Bhoja of Dhārā, or her dancing "flow" (*dhārā*), which is about to drain away Hammīra's good fortune. Nayacandra thus presents Dharmasiṃha as an adept in Bharata's famous treatise on dance and theater (*adhīti bharate,* 9.156) the *Nāṭyaśāstra,* and uses his knowledge effectively to deceive the Chauhan king, with songs, dance, and so on (*gīta-nṛtyâdi*).[37] The trick works: Dharmasiṃha, hiding his grudge (*gupta-vairaḥ*, 156), is reinstalled in his post as minister, deceitfully promising to double the amount of Hammīra's 'dead horses'. Hammīra appears to have forgotten all the things his father told him not to do.[38]

Put differently, this is the start of another story about a sleepy Chauhan king, who will be unable to control his horse-like senses. The last verse of the extract quoted above (9.162) clearly suggests that it is indeed Hammīra who is the real blind man (*andham*). The whole episode is purposefully silent about who the 'blind man' is. Blinded by greed (*lobhāt*) Hammīra doesn't see through the blind man's deceit. A physically blind and impotent man is making the king mentally blind and virtually impotent. To make this transformation become apparent, the narrative flow briefly stops, and we get three verses commenting on the fatal effect of blinding greed on the quintessential quality of right discernment (*viveka*):

> Even in the heart of the good the light of right judgment (*viveka-dīpo*)
> shines only until the windstorm of greed reaches the state of insanity.
> What is this creeper of greed? It appears as something strange indeed:
> the sickle of right discrimination (*sad-viveka*) only becomes blunt in it.
> Due to the madness of a flashing greed even the "drops" [39] become turbid (*andham-bhaviṣṇavaḥ*):

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om iti pratipadyaîṣā gatā rajñe tadūciṣī |
lobhāt so 'py andham āhūyâdhyakārṣīt svapade punaḥ ||9.162||

[37] There's thus again a meta-poetic touch to the episode, both characters and readers are put to the test of noting Dharmasiṃha (or Nayacandra's) playful deceit.

[38] Worthy of note is that in the previous canto his father had warned him that a king should never re-appoint a man whom you have harmed, for he will hide his grudge (*vaira*) and betray him by means of trickery (8.101). Hammīra indeed appears to have forgotten all the advice on good conduct and political wisdom (*nīti*) needed to maintain Royal Fortune, which his father urged him not to forget (*vismaro mā*, 8.74).

[39] The idea of the "drops" is a bit unclear to me. I take them to symbolize the eyes or the tears that appear in the eyes in moments of intense joy, which make the vision turbid.

they turn enemies into brothers, and brothers into enemies.[40]

These verses set the tone for the rest of the poem. Hammīra's maddening greed is said to blow out the light of right judgment (*viveka*), to cause a state of mental dullness (*kuṇṭhatām*), and make his vision – his eye-like drops - become turbid or blind (*andham-bhaviṣṇavaḥ*). The result is that the king is mixing up friend and foe. In the remainder of the canto this logic further unfolds. Here is a translation of the next unit:

Driven by anger this blind man wished to retaliate his grudge (*vaira*). In order to bring down the kingdom he took measures that were bad for the future (*dur-āyatīn*). He made the king's eyes turn to greed (*lobha-dṛṣṭim*) on the path called 'seizing wealth' and tormented the subjects by imposing heavy taxes. Taking horses from horse owners and wealth from the wealthy, he, with his cruel acts (*krūra-karmā*), became like the end of times (*kṣaya-kāla*) for the people.[41] Filling the treasury with riches, he became the favorite of the king. Always indeed both kings and courtesans love someone who gives wealth. But when someone makes the treasury grow by punishing his subjects, is this not like nourishing the body with one's own flesh?

Because Bhoja was enjoying his former post, grudge had grown in his heart for a long time. He asked him (Bhoja) clarity about the revenue from the past year. When Bhojadeva saw this bursting of blindness (*andha-sphūrtim ālokya*), he became angry and quickly went to the king to inform him. Folding his hands as a crest on his head, he said: "If my life is of any use to the king, then let him take it. But I do not tolerate the humiliating speech of a blind man (*andhasya*)!" The king replied: "No one should reject the command of this Dharmasiṃha, whose devotion (*bhakti*) towards me is imperishable! One's followers should serve the man who is worshiped by their lord, as if he is the lord himself. Who does not worship the bull, because of his good service to the firm Śiva, 'the Pillar' (*suthira-sthāṇu*)?"

Because of this speech and because he saw the violent look in his face (*raudra-dṛg-vaktrâlokanena*), that pure-minded (*śuddha-dhīḥ*) Bhojadeva understood that the king's mind was corrupted (*duṣṭâśayam*). He gave everything to him (*tasya,* Hammīra/Dharmasiṃha) as if his mind knew no desire. Indeed, when one's business is completely destroyed, what can even a strong man do? Nevertheless, because of his noble descent, this man did not abandon the loyalty to his lord (*svāmi-bhaktatām*). Bhoja served the king, like a yogi devotes himself to the supreme *brahman*.[42]

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[40] viveka-dīpo dīpyeta tāvad dhṛdi satām api|
tṛṣṇā-jhaṅjhā-marud yāvan na bhajed unmadiṣṇutām ||163||
tṛṣṇā-vallir iyaṃ kā 'pi navaîva pratibhāsate |
sad-viveka-kuṭhāro 'gān navaraṃ yatra kuṇṭhatām ||164||
bindavo 'pi lasal-lobha-madenândham-bhaviṣṇavaḥ | (I take *lasal* from Kota mss. Instead of *sphural*)
sapatnān sodarīyanti sapatnīyanti sodarān ||165||

[41] Literally the "Time of destruction", which is meant to refer to the dissolution of the world at the end of the *kaliyuga.*

[42] pracikīrṣann athâmarṣād andho vaira-pratikriyām|
cakre tad-rājyam ucchettuṃ sa upāyān durāyatīn ||166||
lobha-dṛṣṭim nṛpaṃ kṛtvā draviṇâdāna-vartmanā |

The above passage forms another unit, so let me pause here again to reflect on what is happening. On the surface, the whole episode may read as a critique of Dharmasiṃha. However, worthy of attention, is the deliberate silence of the name 'Dharmasiṃha'. At the end of this scene this blind man has clearly assimilated into Hammīra's own character. We could say that Dharmasiṃha, after Hammīra's cruel mutilation, ceases to be his former self. He becomes the nameless 'blind one' (*andha*), as if to hold up a mirror to Hammīra's own character. The cruel acts (*krūra-karmā*) of a blind man become for the people like the 'Time of destruction' (*kṣaya-kāla*) - the final destruction of the cosmos at the end of the *kaliyuga,* after which a new cycle starts. Dharmasiṃha's name only appears as 'Dharmasiṃha' in Dhārādevī's deceitful message to the king, and accordingly also in Hammīra's delusional reply to Bhoja. He foolishly says that "the command of Dharmasiṃha" (*dharmasiṃhasya śāsanam*) cannot be rejected, for his "devotion towards me is imperishable" (*yasya mayi bhaktir anaśvarī,* 9.174).

After this fatal misperception, Dharmasiṃha's name never turns up again. His role in the narrative is finished. Put otherwise, *Dharmasiṃha's command is Hammīra's command.* Bhoja is forced to give all his property to an unspecified 'him' (*tasya*). The violent (*raudra*)

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sa prajāḥ pīḍayām āsa caṇḍa-daṇḍa-prapātanaiḥ ||9.167||
gṛhṇann aśva-dhanebhyo 'śvān dhana-vadbhyo dhanāni ca |
krūra-karmā sa lokānāṃ kṣaya-kāla ivâbhavat ||9.168||
dravyaih sa pūrayan kośaṃ rājño 'bhūd bhṛśa-vallabhaḥ |
veśyānāṃ ca nṛpāṇāṃ ca dravyado hi sadā priyaḥ ||9.169||
prajā-daṇḍena yat tena pratene kośa-varddhanam |
tat kiṃ svasyaîva māṃsena na sva-dehôpa-bṛṃhaṇam ||9.170||
atha sva-pada-bhokṛtvād vṛddha-vairaś ciraṃ hṛdi |
sa bhuktâbda-vyayâdāya-śuddhiṃ bhojam ayācata ||9.171||
kruddho 'ndha-sphūrtim ālokya bhojadevo 'tha satvaram |
gatvā vyajijñapad bhūpaṃ mauli-maulīyitāñjaliḥ ||9.172||
devasya yadi me prāṇaiḥ kāryaṃ gṛhṇātu tarhi tān|
na sahe param andhasya vākyato'[pi] kadarthanām ||9.173|| Syllable missing, '*pi* added.
nijagāda nṛpo yasya mayi bhaktir anaśvarī |
na lupyate 'tra kenāpi dharmasiṃhasya śāsanam ||9.174||
svāmîva svāmināṃ mānyaḥ sevanīyo 'nujīvibhiḥ |
susthira-sthāṇu-satkārād anaḍvān kiṃ na pūjyate ||9.175||
bhāṣaṇeṇâmunā raudra-dṛg-vaktrâlokanena ca |
nṛpaṃ duṣṭâśayaṃ jñātvā bhojadevaḥ sa śuddha-dhīḥ ||9.176||
nirīha-citta-vat tasya sarvasvam api dattavān |
mūlād vinaṣṭe kārye hi kiṃ kuryād balavān api ||9.177||
tathā 'py eṣo 'bhijātatvād ajahat svāmi-bhaktatām |
yogîva paramaṃ brahma bhojo bhūpam asevata ||9.178||

look in Hammīra's face is clearly suggestive of *his* cruelty.[43] Hammīra indeed explicitly says that he and the blinded "Lion Dharma" have become inseparable. They form a strong, firm pair, like the bull Nandi supports the firm (*susthira*) Śiva, the Pillar (*sthāṇu*). They should be served equally as they are worshipped equally (9.175).

Hammīra's delusion, his corruption of mind (*duṣṭāśayam*) and the violent look in his face and eyes contrast dramatically with the character of the pure-minded (*śudha-dhīḥ*) Bhojadeva, his wise half-brother who is presented as the actual exemplar of loyalty (*svāmi-bhaktatām*), displaying an extraordinary control of his senses. This devout man (initially) decides to stay loyal, despite clearly *seeing* such 'throbbing' display of blindness (*andha-sphūrtim ālokya*) and despite saying that he cannot tolerate the humiliation caused by the words "of a blind man" (*andhasya*, 9.173). The last part betrays that the tolerance of the pure-minded Bhojadeva may have a limit. Hammīra's foolish and humiliating words will indeed strike again. After the ominous time-marker 'the other day' the important *Pañcatantra* subtext story of the owls and the crows finally becomes explicit. Here follows a translation of the rest of the ninth canto.[44]

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[43] On the connection between *raudra* and *krūra,* "cruelty", see Pollock 2016: 333 n12. This connotation is also clear from the *Pañcatantra story* where the Owl king is represented as violent and cruel. The following extract is quoted from the Clay edition and translation of Olivelle (2006: 370-1):"(...) vicious by nature, cruel to an extreme; he is mean, and unpleasant in his speech; how can you expect to get protection, if you crown this owl king?" (*svabhāva-raudram, atyugraṃ, kṣudram, apriya-vādinam ulūkam abhiṣicyêmaṃ katham rakṣā bhaviṣyati*?)

[44] anyedyur nṛpatir vaijanātha-yātrām upāgataḥ |
dṛṣṭvā pṛṣṭha-sthitaṃ bhojam anyoktyêdam abhāṣata ||9.179||
santy evâtra pade pade 'pi bahavaḥ kṣudrā nikāmaṃ khagā
no kutrâpi samo 'sti garhya itaraḥ kākāt varākāt param |
krodhâviṣta-paṭiṣṭha-ghūka-nikarâsyāgrôttha-koṭi-kṣatais
truṭyat-pakṣa-cayo 'pi yas taru-taṭaṃ nâpa-trapaḥ prôjjhati ||9.180||
anayā 'nyokti-kaumudyā bhojo 'mbhojam ivâstaruk|
veśmâgatya rahaḥ pīthasiṃhaṃ sodaram abravīt ||9.181||
devo 'dya kalya utpaśya vacanair durmanāyitaḥ |
sevā-hevākino 'py asmān na tṛṇāny api manyate ||9.182||
avāptâmeya-sāmrājya-mada-mohita-mānasāḥ|
yadi vā pārthivā naîva kvacid ekānta-vatsalāḥ ||9.183||
yātrā-vyājena tad yāmo dināni katicid bahiḥ|
kāla-kṣepo 'śubhe śreyān nīti-vidbhir jage yataḥ ||9.184||
saṃmantrya sodareṇaîvaṃ bhūpaṃ gatvā vyajijñapat |
kāśyāṃ vrajāmi yātrāyai yady ādiśati bhūpatiḥ ||9.185||
jagāda bhūpatir yāsi parataḥ parato na kim |
vinā bhavantam apy evam puraṃ saṃśobhate purā ||9.186||
ity ākruṣṭo 'pi kaulīnyāt kṣamām eva kṣamāpatau |
bibhrāṇaḥ pracacālaîṣo 'nu kāśīm saparicchadaḥ ||9.187||
tasmin gate kṣitipatiḥ prasarat-pramoda-

The other day, the king undertook a journey to Vaijanātha[45]. When he saw that Bhoja was standing behind his back he uttered this allegory:

Everywhere indeed this place abounds with many vile birds.
But nowhere does a bird deserve the same contempt as the wretched crow.
The troops of owls - those who are very clever and filled with anger -
tore off his feathers through the countless bites from the tips of their beaks.
Yet, shamelessly, he doesn't leave behind his abode in the tree.

Because of the moonlight of this allegory (*anayānyokti-kaumudyā*), Bhoja became like the day-lotus deprived of luster. He went to his house and said to his brother Pīthasiṃha: "See! This morning the king has become mad (*durmanāyitaḥ*) through his words. Even though we are devoted to his service, he doesn't consider us even the worth of a straw (*na tṛṇāny api manyate*). Their minds are deluded by the madness (*mada-mohita-manāḥ*) of obtaining an immeasurable empire. And yet nowhere do kings show affection to even a single person (*ekānta-vatsalāḥ*). Let us therefore go away for a few days, under the pretext (*chala*) of going on a pilgrimage. After all, it is said by those who know the wisdom of policy (*nīti*) that the best thing to do in misfortune is to let some time pass by (*kāla-kṣepo*)."

Discussing the matter in this way with his brother he went to the king and informed him: "If the king grants me permission, I will go to Kāśi (Varanasi) for a pilgrimage." The king said: "Why don't you go away farther? Even without you indeed, this city will shine like earlier." Despite this offence, because of his nobility (*kaulinyāt*) he still bore patience (*kṣamām*) with the king, "the lord of the earth" (*kṣamā-patau*). And with his retinue he left to Kāśi.

When he left, the king, whose heart was overflowing with joy,
suitably appointed the hero Ratipāla – "Protector of Pleasure" - on the post of general.
And while combining the threefold aims of human life,
which is the only good in this world,
he spent his days in utmost enjoyment.

This is how the first canto about Hammīra's kingship dramatically and ironically comes to an end. The story of Hammīra's injustice toward the wise Dharmasiṃha transforms into his mistreatment of his replacer, another wise man, fittingly called Bhojadeva, described as "pure-minded" (*śuddha-dhīḥ*, 9.176), who in turn is replaced by a man who is ominously called Ratipāla. This name has a clear comic ring. It means something like "Protector of (Sexual) Pleasure". I will discuss the significance of this character below.

hṛd daṇḍanāyaka-pade ratipāla-vīraṃ |
yuktyā 'bhiṣicya jagad-eka-hita-trivarga-
saṃsargato 'tisarasān divasān anaiṣīt ||9.188||

[45] Vernacular for Vidyanātha, name for Śiva as lord of medicine.

First, I want to elaborate on how the whole episode is loaded with a deep sense of tragic irony, revolving around Hammīra's two insults directed at Bhoja.

Most interesting is the first insult, where Hammīra uses an allegorical expression (*anyokti*), to indirectly humiliate Bhoja, who is standing behind his back. But Hammīra seems to misunderstand the gist of the *Pañcatantra* allegory of the owl and crow which he uses to make his insult. In Hammīra's allegory the 'vile crow' is obviously meant to refer to Bhoja. But the crows in the *Pañcatantra* story, even though massacred by the owls, decide to stay in their tree...and take revenge! Similarly, this Bhojadeva, even though everything is taken away from him (by Hammīra/Dharmasiṃha), decides to stay in the kingdom. This why Hammīra uses the analogy with the crow to insult Bhoja. But Hammīra doesn't seem to understand that the *Pañcatantra* story revolves around how the *more clever* crows – who had enough of the suffering inflicted by the owls - manage to completely burn down the camp of the powerful owls. In other words, Hammīra's allegory doesn't make sense. Hammīra appears to wrongly refer to the owl as the "most clever" (*patiṣṭha*), whereas the *Pañcatantra* story typically juxtaposes the stupidity, cruelty and blindness of the owl with the more thoughtful nature of the crow. The vile crow is presented in the influential version of the twelfth-century Jain author Pūrṇabhadra (who composed the work in 1199) as the most clever of the birds (*ayaṃ pakṣiṇāṃ madhye 'ti-caturaḥ*).[46]

The 'mistake' in Hammīra's allegory is perhaps also literally audible, and indicative of the misfortune that is about to come, both for Hammīra and Bhoja. We read how Bhoja, compared to a lotus (*ambhoja*) blooming during the day, loses his luster (*asta-ruk*) because of "this moonlight of allegorical speech", *anayânyokti-kaumudyā*. In this compound the instrumental demonstrative noun *anayā,* can be read as *a-naya* "bad policy". Thus, instead of "this moonlight of allegoric speech", it can be read as "the moonlight of this allegory *of bad policy* (*a-naya*)". This is quite fitting to the gist of the *Pañcatantra* story, where the owl camp is destroyed because of the owl king's bad policy. Bhoja, moreover, explains to his brother that "because of his words" (*vacanair*) Hammīra has become mad or ignorant (*durmanāyitaḥ,* 9.182), like all kings who are deluded by madness (*mada-mohita-manāḥ,* 9.183). And still, the patient Bhoja controls his emotions, like a yogi, and decides *to let time pass* (*kāla-kṣepo*). Contrary to Hammīra, the wise Bhojadeva does know what the experts on political wisdom (*nīti*) actually say. Unfortunately for Bhoja, yet another humiliating insult follows. It is worth recalling that earlier he indeed indicated that he cannot tolerate the humiliating acts of a blind man (9.173). Not unexpectedly therefore, the shift in Bhoja's loyalty forms the topic of the next canto.

[46] Sanskrit quoted from the edition of Hertel (1908: 181). There is of course some ambivalence regarding the status of both rivalling parties, the owls and the crows, who are both morally ambiguous, which Hammīra seems to deny here by referring to the Owl as the most clever. In HMK, it is Hammīra who can be said to represent the misfortunate fate of the day-blind owl king.

Finally, it is worth emphasizing that the dramatic gap between Hammīra's blindness and the reader's awareness widens to an extreme in the concluding verse. Hammīra remains completely blind to the fatal process he has set in motion, and his joy seems to increase with each foolish act. We learn how excessive joy (*pramoda*) flows through his heart as Bhoja leaves the kingdom. Hammīra foolishly replaces the loyal Bhoja by a seemingly eminent man, a "hero" (*vīram*) named Ratipāla, "Protector of (sexual) Pleasure", who will also later make his name true.[47] The name of this character is a playful variation on the name of one of the two traitors in the Hammīra's legend, known in other versions as Rāyapāla or Rāmapāla.[48] Nayacandra must have changed his name to underscore the stupidity of Hammīra's choice to replace the loyal, wise and "pure-minded" (*śuddha-dhīḥ,* 9.176) Bhoja by a man whose name already reveals his untrustworthy nature. To enhance the irony of the whole canto, the concluding verse describes this decision as done "suitably" (*yuktyā*). While the ill-fortuned Bhojadeva leaves the court, the king himself continues to spend his days in *over*-enjoyment (*ati-sarasān divasān*). Throughout the rest of the poem Hammīra remains blind and deaf to the extreme dissonance between his personal satisfaction and the suffering his kingship is inflicting upon his subjects.

The whole ninth canto sets the stage for the perspective that it is Royal Fortune who considers worthless rulers like Hammīra who don't really seem to concern themselves with the welfare of the kingdom. We come to realize that king Hammīra is not the 'one' (*eka*) worthy of praise in the dark age of Kali, but rather exemplifies the vagaries of the present time itself. He *becomes* the blind and impotent 'Lion Dharma', the embodiment of a deeply flawed kingship, a royal *dharma* gone awry, as usual in the *kaliyuga.* An unjustly blinded and castrated 'Lion of Righteousness' still manages to employ his skill in the art of dance, instructing someone called Dhārādevī, the "Queen of Flow", as if to playfully drain away the kingdom's Royal Fortune.

[47] At a crucial moment in the thirteenth canto Ratipāla will indeed betray Hammīra after the enemy has deceivingly won his trust by offering him alcohol and the sexual services of his sister. By naming the would-be-traitor "Ratipāla" Nayacandra intensifies the dramatic irony of the remainder of the narrative. Nayacandra will use the character Ratipāla as yet another mirror image of Hammīra himself, testing his kingship, revealing how the Chauhan king responds to and fulfills his fate. Like with the 'traitor' Dharmasiṃha, Hammīra will later too persist in viewing Ratipāla as his most loyal and devoted general, again stubbornly neglecting the advice of his younger brother Vīrama – perhaps also fictional (meant as a nod to his patron Vīrama Tomar, as I explain in the last chapter, section 5.2).

[48] E.g. Rāyapāla in *Hammīrāyaṇa,* and Rāmapāla in *Puruṣaparīkṣā.*

4.4 Bhojadeva's lament: blaming Hammīra, waking Alauddin

Let me repeat that HMK is deeply concerned with the topic of fame and blame, and their potentially blurred distinction. What is really at stake throughout HMK, at least for the Chauhan king himself, is the prevention of posthumous blame. I have highlighted how his story doesn't take a splendid start. Hammīra, introduced in verse 1.8 as the one and only (*eka*) king worthy of praise in this age, doesn't escape the typical criticism of kings found throughout Sanskrit literature. In the ninth canto Nayacandra thus uses a stock imagery of royal critique when comparing Hammīra's behavior to that of a courtesan (*veśya,* 9.169). In Shulman's book *The King and the Clown,* which discusses the various comic and tragic transformations of kingship in South Asian literature, he notes how kings and courtesans are believed to "indulge in "sin," are indifferent to others' sufferings, blend truth and falsehood, cruelty and mercy; both, moreover, seek their own advantage before all else."[49] Nayacandra of course never gets that explicit. He never directly speaks of Hammīra as a cruel, selfish king. He uses other characters to voice subversive visions on Hammīra's kingship. Hammīra will even get the chance to defend himself. And this is what makes the poem so fascinating. Nayacandra seems to be playing a game of balance, in which not only opposing narrative modes clash, but also a range of perspectives.

In this section I will further explore the perspective of Bhojadeva, who can be said to assume the role of the unjustly treated Dharmasiṃha. I do this through a close reading of the tenth canto. After the turbulent ninth canto, the criticism of Hammīra becomes less explicit. It is as if the poem seeks to gradually rebuild the heroic stature of the main protagonist, or restore the balance between the eulogistic format and the deeply tragic content. But the damage done to Hammīra's heroic image does continue to make itself audible in the rest of the narrative. As always, we are invited to read or listen carefully.

The tenth canto further reflects on Hammīra's not so ideal kingship from the perspective of the unfortunate Bhojadeva, who decides to betray the king. Bhoja's betrayal will eventually drive him further into misery. But it also brings about the fruition of what he wants: revenge, the retaliation (*prati-kriyā,* "counter-action", 10.2) of what he perceives as causeless injustice. And interestingly, all this leads to the awakening of the 'lion' Alauddin from his sleep, as I will demonstrate in this section. We learn in the first verse of the tenth canto that Bhoja, while leaving the kingdom, starts contemplating his misfortune (*sva-durdaśām*), caused by the king's crime (*apamānād*). Worthy of note is that Bhoja's subsequent betrayal is thus again motivated by thoughtful reflection, and not by

[49] Shulman 1985: 308, n18, paraphrasing Sternbach (1953: 143) about this popular comparison in gnomic literature.

the recklessness that characterizes the Chauhan king. The second verse explains the reason behind his betrayal:

> Without any reason even, the king – protector of man -
> has displayed such contempt for me.
> If I don't retaliate this
> then of what use is
> the destiny of the wise?[50]

This and several of the subsequent verses make explicit that for less virile men like the wise Dharmasiṃha and Bhoja too, there's something like a sense of pride (*abhi-māna,* 10.1, 10.5), here most likely in the sense of self-respect. As is often the case in epic and tragic literature, as well as in real life, conflict typically revolves around the problem of pride. There's an ambivalence toward this notion. It can assume many forms, with both positive and pejorative connotations, ranging from a sense of self-respect to a blinding, selfish arrogance, obstinacy and self-conceit, often indicated by the more pejorative *ahaṅ-kāra*, 'the I-maker', egoism. In Rajput literature it is typically used in the sense of one's wounded sense of honor (*māna*) which aligns with the hero's (somewhat delusional) desire to prevent future shame and blame, a major topic in the penultimate canto (discussed in the next sections).

The general idea here is that Bhoja's sense of pride or self-respect dictates him to do something, and not just let the injustice go unpunished (like Dharmasiṃha did). One verse (10.7) says that people who tolerate (*sahate*) the humiliation inflicted by the enemy have an impotent mind (*klība-manā*, 10.7): let there be no birth to him, for he steals away the pride of his mother's youth (*jananī-yauvana-garva-garhiṇī*). The verse clearly voices the point implicit in the previous canto where the castrated Dharmasiṃha's preserved his mental potency, in contrast to the de facto impotence of extreme virility (*puṃstvam,* "manliness"), embodied by Bhīmasiṃha (and warrior-kings like Hammīra). In other words, Bhoja seems to resume the role of the unjustly humiliated Dharmasiṃha.

Another important point is that through Bhoja's stream of thoughts, we learn that friendship and enmity is *a matter of how one acts alone* (*kriyayâiva,* 10.6): friends/family can therefore turn into enemies, and vice versa (10.6), again reinforcing the message from the previous canto (as made explicit in 9.156). It is not a crime (*pātakam*) when one would kill someone who commits great crimes, even when he is a kinsman (10.5). These points – Bhoja's perspective – anticipate Hammīra's later fatal delusion. He will refuse to kill his beloved new general 'Ratipāla', accused of treason, because of his noble descent (*kulīna*). By contrast, he will reason that the Mongol refugees will betray him because of their

[50] vitatāna vinā 'pi kāraṇaṃ nara-nātho mama yāṃ tiraskriyām |
vidadhe yadi tat-pratikriyāṃ na tadā kêva manasvināṃ gatiḥ ||10.2||

natural otherness (*paratvam*). I discuss these episodes in the next sections. For now, I want to emphasize how Bhoja's thoughts make us understand – and indeed sympathize with - the perspective of those who set out to shift loyalties. It may only be natural that those who are humiliated *without any reason* (*vinā'pi kāraṇam,* 10.2), like Dharmasiṃha and Bhoja, will want to retaliate the injustice inflicted upon them.

Bhoja himself is perhaps not entirely excused for what he does next, when he decides to go to Yoginīpuram (Delhi), and serve the king of the *mlecchas* 'the barbarians'. We learn how every day the king nourished (*apuṣat*) his 'mature' pride (*prauḍha-mānam*) – here perhaps in the sense of Bhoja's wounded sense of honor – with many gifts of gold, horses, etc. The result is that Bhoja became his own (*nija,* 10.21) - or one of his own people. (In the slightly later *Kānhaḍade-prabandha* (1455), this Bhoja is presented as one of Alauddin's most loyal warriors.)[51] The episode presents this winning over of Bhoja as the result of Alauddin's infallible political skills (10.13). But we might also get the sense that Bhoja gets back what the blind Hammīra/Dharmasiṃha unjustly extracted from him. Indeed, what Bhoja ultimately wants, is retaliation, *justice.*

Bhoja's arrival in Alauddin's court serves as the prelude to a fascinating episode, in which the reader, together with Alauddin, is invited to see through the illusory nature of the panegyric mode. Having won Bhoja over to his side, Alauddin, on some occasion (*anyadā*), asks Bhoja if it is possible to defeat Hammīra quickly in the war (*katham eṣa hammīro jīyate yudhi mayā drutam eva*, 10.14). What follows is a set of verses in which the fearless (*gata-bhīr,* 10.15) Bhoja lavishly praises Hammīra's qualities as a warrior and ruler, each time ending by throwing back the question Alauddin asked him: "how is it then possible to conquer the illustrious hero Hammīra on the battlefield in mere play" (*sa śrīhammīravīraḥ samara-bhuvi kathaṃ jīyate līlayâiva*, 10.16-10.24)?

The illustrious image of Hammīra in these verses creates a stark dissonance with the actualized portrayal of Hammīra's kingship from the previous canto. But like in the previous cantos, right after the body of praise thickens to an extreme, our poet breaks this illusory image, and unveils the mask of the panegyric mode. Again, the imagery of waking and blindness becomes central in making this playful move. And the movement itself, the transition to the 'truth', appears to become audible through a meaningful change in meter and tone.

Let me show how this shift happens. Important to note is that Bhoja in fact introduces his long speech by saying that if Alauddin asks the truth (*satyam*), he shouldn't get angry at him. The meter then purposefully changes to the long *sragdharā* meter (4x21 syllables) where Hammīra is lavishly praised as the most ideal ruler, conjuring up an image of the Chauhan king that would indeed potentially anger his new lord Alauddin. The first verse (finally) re-introduces Lakṣmī, the goddess of Royal Fortune who was left out from the

[51]See p. 35 in translation by Bhatnagar 1991.

not so ideal ninth canto. It thus ends by saying that Hammīra is like Viṣṇu who "displays the Fortune of prosperity and happiness" (*tanute bhāgya-saubhāgya-lakṣmīṃ,* 10.16). This idealistic tone continues for another eleven verses. But in the two last verses the concluding refrain - 'how is it then possible to defeat him' - drops out. And the meter meaningfully changes to that of the "tiger's play", *śārdūlavikrīḍita*, as if to anticipate the slow (and dangerous?) approach of the truth (*satyam*), which Bhoja said he would tell. Let's first consider how the imagery of 'waking' recurs in one of these final verses of praise:

> Some are brave, others intelligent, and some are benevolent.
> Some are wise, others good, and yet others are generous.
> That superior man who is endowed with the greatness
> of cultivating only one of these qualities, he is awake.
> But someone whose body contains all these excellent qualities,
> that is the hero Hammīra.[52]

Bhoja's verse – clearly mimicking the tone of the royal panegyric (*praśasti*) - suggests that Hammīra must be the most wakeful hero on the earth. After all, he is someone who is endowed with all the virtuous qualities (needed to attract Royal Fortune). This verse thus continues the tone of the previous verses, all of which ended with the rhetorical question 'how then can Hammīra be defeated in battle, in mere play?' But the exclusion of this refrain, together with the switch to the 'tiger's play' meter creates the expectation that we are about to hear something different, the truth (*satyam*) about how and why Hammīra can be defeated. It is indeed only two verses later that we hear another "but" (*param*).[53] It throws us back to Hammīra's not so ideal actualized kingship, reminding us that *now* the kingdom is under the sway of a "blind man":

> But now -
> just like what the wind is to a flame
> what a cloud is to a bunch of lotuses
> what the passing of day is to the sun
> what sex with a beautiful woman is to the best ascetic
> what the swelling of a disease is to the body
> what clinging to extreme greed is for a group of good virtues -

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[52] śūraḥ kaścana kaścanâpi matimān dākṣiṇyavān kaścana
prājñaḥ kaścana kaścanâpi sukṛti dātā punaḥ kaścana |
ity ekâika-guṇa-prarūḍha-mahimā jāgarti bhūyān janaḥ
sarvaiḥ śreṣṭha-guṇair adhiṣṭhita-tanur hammīra-vīraḥ param ||10.25||

[53] Like in the other verse, the 'but' comes at the very end of the verse. In English we would place it at the very beginning to create the contrastive effect.

there *is* a cause of the destruction of his kingdom:
one blind man is gambling.[54]

It seems that Hammīra as an embodiment of the wakeful ideal king (and good husband to Royal Fortune) only exists in some unreal, idealized space outside time, in the panegyric mode. The verse slowly approaches the tragic truth, perhaps not unlike the tiger's slow but deadly pace which gives its name to the meter of these final verses.[55] The verse thus starts with a more general imagery about a process of fading or decay in natural phenomena. When reaching the last example we are clearly reminded of Hammīra's blinding greed from the previous canto. The last line then finally announces 'the truth', or really responds to Alauddin's question. The supposedly invincible Hammīra can actually be defeated. This is because now, in the present time (*adhunā*), there's one blind man, who "shines" or rather "gambles" (*dīvyati*).[56] This blind man *is* or will be the cause of the destruction of his kingdom (*tad-rājyasya-vināśa-hetur*). On the surface, the verse is meant to point to the blinded Dharmasiṃha who is pulling the strings in Hammīra's kingdom. However, the verse purposefully speaks in unspecific terms about "one blind man" (*eko 'ndho*). The assimilation between Dharmasiṃha and Hammīra in the previous canto, as argued above, is therefore preserved. There too Bhoja only speaks about the 'blind one', never about Dharmasiṃha.

More can be said about Bhoja's concluding verse. We could say that in this verse the parallel with the destructive dice game of the *Mahābhārata* becomes apparent. In the Chauhan kingdom there's a "blind man playing the dice". Similar to the start of the *Mahābhārata* war, the events leading to the complete destruction of the Chauhan dynasty, take off with the public humiliation of Dharmasiṃha, Hammīra's foremost minister. The scene might be meant to be reminiscent of the assault on Draupadī – who symbolizes the goddess of Fortune - after Yudhiṣṭhira staked her in a dice game and lost her, leading to her public humiliation in the assembly hall. Both the humiliation of Dharmasiṃha and Draupadī function as the major drive for the ensuing conflict, ultimately culminating in a destructive massacre on both sides.

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[54] dīpyasyêva samīraṇaḥ sarasija-śreṇer ivâmbhodharaḥ
sūryasyêva dinâtyayo yativarasyêvaîṇadṛk-ṣaṅgamaḥ |
dehasyêva gadôdayo guṇa-gaṇasyêvâtilobhâśrayas
tadrājyasya vināśa-hetur adhunâiko 'ndhaḥ paraṃ dīvyati ||10.28||

[55] Cf. Yigal Bronner's observation about this meter in a different context, noting how "to the ear of the trained *kāvya* reader, even the pattern of long and short syllables resembles the trot of a large cat" (2010:32).

[56] This verbal root also signifies "to shine, be bright", but the connection with the cause of defeat clearly suggests its meaning as gambling, playing the dice game. In Vyāsa's *Mahābhārata* this *dīvyati* "he gambles, plays or stakes" recurs again and again when Yudhiṣṭhira stakes his kingdom.

I suggest that Nayacandra purposefully evokes this parallel, making the analogy rather explicit through the dice-imagery chosen by Bhoja. He explains how a blind man who gambles (*dīvyati*) is the "cause of his kingdom's destruction" (*tadrājasya vināśa-hetuḥ*). The repeated evocation of *Mahābhārata* imagery may lend support to this reading. Bhoja was thus compared to Vidura (9.154), the wise and respected advisor to the Pāṇḍava side. Moreover, Bhoja's replacer, the would-be-traitor Ratipāla, will be compared to Śakuni (13.80), the cunning advisor of the Kaurava side who indeed wins the dice game for Duryodhana against Yudhiṣṭhira. Furthermore, in the eighth canto Jaitrasiṃha had reminded Hammīra - in the penultimate verse of his ominous talk on political wisdom that - one should stay away from the game of dice (*durodaram* 8.104): because of a dice game, which *awakens* great misfortune (*jāgrad-udagra-kaṣṭaṃ*), the Pāṇḍavas became an object of mockery (*viḍambanām*). And this is what will happen to Hammīra too. I will explain in the next sections that he repeatedly expresses his fear to become ridiculed (*viḍambanam*, as in 13.142).

Bhoja subtly and ambiguously reveals to Alauddin what the reader figured out before, the truth about Hammīra's fatal condition of blindness. The deliberate ambiguity about the 'gambling blind man' thus continues ingeniously in the next verse, preventing the heroic frame from collapsing. Bhoja explains that if Alauddin attacks the Chauhan kingdom now, Hammīra's subjects will leave him. This is because "already earlier they had reached a state of despair, due to the very violent punishment *inflicted by someone who lost his eyes* (*itā nirāśatāṃ gata-netra-caṇḍa-tara-daṇḍanāt purā*, 10.30). Again, the assimilation is skillfully preserved.[57]

It's important to be attentive to the charm of this silence about Dharmasiṃha's name. For example, the ambiguity gets lost in Kirtane's paraphrase which irons out the ambivalences and tensions, or in the Hindi translation of the text, which chooses to translate the unspecified "blind man" and "the one who lost his eyes" with the name Dharmasiṃha.[58] But his name, as mentioned before, never shows up after 'the blind man' assimilated into Hammīra himself as his most devoted minister. The general idea emerging from Bhoja's perspective is that the Chauhan kingdom is under the sway of a blind man. Bhoja explicitly blamed Hammīra for insulting him without any reason. Now he implicitly blames him for blindly staking the Fortune (Śrī/Lakṣmī) of the kingdom,

[57] The severe punishment or *daṇḍa,* literally the staff or rod as the symbol of power, inflicted by "someone without eyes" (*gata-netra*), can both refer to Hammīra, who 'blindly' punished Dharmasiṃha, or to the blinded Dharmasiṃha who in revenge punishes Hammīra by tormenting his subjects. In the previous canto the powerful post of *daṇḍa-nāyaka*, "the one who wields the staff" (9.188) seems to pass on from Dharmasiṃha to Bhoja, then back to the revengeful blind Dharmasiṃha, then to the hero Ratipāla, "Protector of Pleasure", who will continue to symbolize the unstable nature of Hammīra's power.

[58] Trivedi 1997: 117.

putting at risk the welfare of his subjects, who like Bhoja himself have reached a state of despair (*nirāśatāṃ,* 10.30).

Apart from blaming Hammīra, Bhoja has another important role to play in the tenth canto. The story of Bhoja's misfortune and flight to Alauddin's court has the effect of inverting the traditional heroic core of the Hammīra legend. I explain in more detail in the next chapter how the refugee Bhoja clearly takes the place of the refugee Mahimāsāhi in the traditional story. Here I want to emphasize how Bhoja's inversive role aligns with another purpose laid out for him, namely to awaken Alauddin by instigating his anger (*allāvadīnâmarṣaṇo*, which is the title of the tenth canto.) Like the 'fictional' Dharmasiṃha, Bhoja fades out from the poem as soon as this role is completed. Interestingly, as noted earlier, HMK's Bhoja seems to have a short afterlife as Alauddin's loyal general in the vernacular epic *Kānhaḍade-prabandha.*

After Bhoja points out the weakness of the Chauhan kingdom – Hammīra himself -, Alauddin sends forth his army to the 'Hinduvāṭa' pass in the Chauhan kingdom. This happens, again, with Ulugh Khan as the celebrated commander "who considers worthless the best among the *kṣatriya* warriors" (*kṣatrôttaṃsān manyamānas tṛṇâṃśān,* 10.32). We get a new variation of the triumph-turned-defeat logic, which will extend itself over the rest of the cantos. The Chauhan camp wins this first military encounter, leading to the obtainment of Lady Victory (*jaya-lakṣmir,* 10.62). The Chauhan victory is celebrated in utmost joy, with an ominous emphasis on Hammīra's admiration and celebration of his new general Ratipāla – the future traitor. It is Ratipāla "Protector of Pleasure" who gladdens Hammīra by spreading forth the king's renown (*khyāti-kṛte,* 10.61). This is how Hammīra praises his beloved general Ratipāla, a clear echo of the deeply ironic concluding verse from the previous canto:

> Then, hearing about the extreme fearlessness of Ratipāla,
> the king's happiness flashed forth.
> And thinking "This is my elephant in rut"
> he threw garlands of gold at his feet.[59]

With Hammīra's extreme fondness of Bhoja's replacer, the new general Ratipāla – "Protector of Sexual Pleasure" -, a new process of assimilation sets in. Ratipāla becomes as it were the new Bhīmasiṃha, an exemplar of extreme bravery (*śaurya*) - which is literally "surpassing an elephant" (*atībhaṃ*).[60] (The way Hammīra values the virile duo

[59] atha kṣitīśo ratipāla-śauryaṃ atībham ākarṇya lasat-pramodaḥ |
matto mamâyaṃ gaja ity amuṣya pāde 'kṣipat kāñcana-śṛngalāni ||10.63||

[60] There's an ironic reference to the idea of this verse in the penultimate canto when Hammīra fights his last battle. In praising Hammīra's heroism, we learn that his arrows first pierce through the armor of a

Ratipāla-Bhīmasiṃha is diametrically opposed to his treatment of the wise duo Bhoja-Dharmasiṃha.) The joyful atmosphere soon breaks. The four Mongol *yavanas*, who are introduced in this canto out of the blue, cannot (yet) share in the enjoyment, and tell Hammīra that they want to punish the "ungrateful" (*kṛta-ghno*) Bhoja. Because of him the "hero's vow" (*vīra-vrataṃ*) becomes dissolved (*vilīnam*)(10.65). But a celebration of the hero's vow - or a condemnation of Bhoja's supposed ingratitude - is clearly not the point of the canto. When Hammīra grants the Mongols permission to punish Bhoja, we learn that his order resembled "Lady Victory's spell of delusion" (*jaya-śrīyo mohana-mantravat*, 10.68). As elsewhere in HMK the blinding Splendor of victory signals the upcoming defeat, on the Chauhan side.

After these two battles, which both Ulugh Khan and Bhoja miraculously survive (Ulugh Khan, "by his good fortune" *bhāgya-yogāt,* 10.57, "by controlling his fate"), they both arrive at Alauddin's court, and tell him what happened. Especially the speech of the ill-fortuned Bhojadeva, whose family has been taken captive, draws the attention. He literally interrupts Ulugh Khan, bursting out into fury (10.71). Spreading out his garment on the ground, he starts rolling back and forth, lamenting his fate in great agony. He proclaims that even after his death what happened that day will not go to oblivion (*na vismared,* 10.73). These are powerful statements, calls to our attention. They might evoke a sense of pity for Bhoja, who lost everything, twice. The first time without any reason; the second time for his 'betrayal' - or his taking refuge in Alauddin's kingdom - while being accused of 'ungratefulness' by Hammīra's own refugee Mahimāsāhi. Let me quote the final verse from Bhoja's lament, followed by Alauddin's reaction:

So what can I do? To whom can I cling?
Where can I go? And what can I say?
This heart, now and then, resembles
a tuft of grass shaken by the wind.

When (Alauddin) asked him
"Why are you rolling on your robe?"
he replied: "Don't you know that the whole earth
is conquered by the Chauhan?"[61]

mad elephant (*matta-vāraṇa*), he then mounts him, making him emit his rut (*mada*) (13.216). Hammīra's arrows are described as having such speed and strength that they pass through the elephants' body, and go away far, "fearing the blame that they too have become like Ratipāla' (*ratipālāvad ete 'pi jātā ity apavādataḥ bhītā...*, 13.217). The idea is that if the arrows would stay in the body of the rutting elephant people might associate the 'arrows' with Ratipāla, Hammīra's 'elephant in rut'.

[61] tat kiṃ karomi kaṃ vā śrayāmi yāmi kva vā kimu vadāmi |
hṛdayam vātândolita-tūla-tulāṃ kalayatîdam anuvelam ||10.76||
luṭhito 'si kim iha sicayôparîti pṛṣṭo 'munā punaḥ so 'vak |
jānāsi kiṃ na nikhilām ilāṃ jitāṃ cāhamānena ||10.77 ||

Bhoja, shaken by the twists of fortune, or fate, not only blames Hammīra, but 'awakens' Alauddin. It is indeed Bhoja's lament that brings the canto to its finale. Bhoja's speech is presented as the ghee that kindles the fire in Alauddin's heart, which was already loaded with the timber of Ulugh Khan's lament (10.78). Bhoja's desperation – perhaps partly deriving from his inability to retaliate the injustice done to him- instigates Alauddin to proclaim his "series of poems" (*kāvya-paraṃparāṃ,* 10.79, till 10.88). Like Bhoja's earlier series of poems within the poem, these too reveal a compelling truth about the Chauhan heroes. They tell us again something about why the Chauhan heroes can be conquered.

Alauddin's anger marks another tragic shift in the narrative. His heroic resolution, uttered in a series of poems, shows how the earlier conflict over paying tribute transforms into a renewed determination. As one verse tells, he now vows to completely destroy the Chauhan dynasty (*nikhile śrīcāhamāne kule,* 10.87). In another verse we learn that Hammīra, as it were, "woke up a lion, whose moist eyes were covered in sleep" (*nidrā-mudraṇa-sāndra-netra-yugalaḥ siṃhaḥ samutthāpito*, 10.81). This line thus creates, once again, an ominous flashback to the ironic death of Hammīra's 'sleepy' predecessor Prahlādana, who died after killing a sleeping lion, which stirred up another lion who killed him. The next verse asks which 'fool' (*ku-dhī*, "having a bad mind") dares to anger king Alauddin. The whole scene might make the following analogy apparent to the reader. Hammīra's foolish support for the virile duo 'Lion Bhīma'- Ratipāla and unjust acts toward the wise duo 'Lion Dharma'-Bhoja leads to the complete awakening of the 'lion' Alauddin who resolves to defeat the last sleepy king of the Chauhan lineage.

Interestingly, Alauddin speaks about steadfastness (*sthairyam*) as "the abode of the game of fame" (*kīrti-keli-sadanam*). In one of the following verses of his heroic speech (10.84) Alauddin pokes fun at those "fickle heroes, Vīrama and the others, trembling with the burden of a wakeful insanity" (*jāgran-mada-bhara-taralāś cañcalā vīramâdyā).* They are driven by an "'itching desire' (*kaṇḍūla*) for the art of killing, which is imagined as a kind of sport or game (*kalā-keli*). But this restless desire to fight is clearly not the game that attracts Lakṣmī. For example, Lawrence McCrea has indicated that in Māgha's *Śiśupālavadha* this itch for battle is a leitmotif that connotes the "prideful, but self-destructive impulsiveness" of Kṛṣṇa's anti-hero, Śiśupāla.[62] This is very similar to the presentation of the Chauhan's heroism in Nayacandra's poem. In HMK the quality really needed to conquer one's enemy is not a hasty and lustful itch for battle, but mindful reflection. In the game like context of war 'wisdom' typically equals the skill to deceive or cheat, *and* see through deceit, as I explained at length in the two previous chapters. The next canto shows again how Ulugh Khan emerges, in 11.22, as the clever (and steady) gamester (*kitavaḥ*), "thinking over and over again" (*mate mate*) about how to deceive

[62] McCrea 2014: 127.

Hammīra. And Hammīra, once again, emerges as the fickle, unsteady ruler, who doesn't realize that he is being tricked, when offered the conditions for a truce – in fact a distraction maneuver to win time and install his troops around the fort. In this episode Hammīra is only deceitfully offered the option to further "play with playful Royal Fortune" (*krīḍīkṛtāṃ krīḍaya rājya-lakṣmīm,* 11.61).[63] The reader knows, by contrast, that she is already slipping away.

4.5 Hammīra's obstinacy: stuck in the past, fearing the future

Perhaps it is time to give Hammīra a voice and examine the disadvantaged perspective of our tragic hero, who is indeed fated to lose Royal Fortune. We might be able to mitigate the negativity surrounding his foolishness, perhaps a natural attribute of every courageous hero. In the penultimate thirteenth canto Hammīra is repeatedly given a chance to voice his perspective, and defend his acts or non-activity, the passivity of fatalism that seems to characterize the tragic hero. For some time, there will be no acts of cruelty or humiliating insults toward those who try to stop Hammīra's tragedy from further unfolding. It will be difficult, however, to forget what has happened to Dharmasiṃha and Bhoja. The latter emphatically proclaimed that what Hammīra did will never go to oblivion (*na vismared,* 10.74). Indeed, the problems caused by Hammīra's blindness will not disappear with Bhoja's disappearance from the narrative. Eventually, Hammīra's tendency to mistake friend for foe, will culminate in a point of no return in canto thirteen. A final fatal error of judgment makes the Chauhan king 'insult' the loyal Mongol Mahimāsāhi, indirectly leading to the fall of Ranthambhor. But before the poem's tragic (and somewhat confusing) climax, discussed in the last three sections of this chapter, Hammīra is given a few opportunities to literally respond to his fate. He can perhaps still defend his name.

In this section I will discuss two extracts from 'dialogues' between Hammīra and his family. In the first one Hammīra refutes the advice of his younger brother Vīrama, who tries to make clear that Hammīra's favorite warlord Ratipāla has betrayed him. In the other one Hammīra refutes the request of his daughter called Devalladevī, who *urges* her father to give her to Alauddin, and thus stop the war by making an alliance. I will first focus on Hammīra's reply to Vīrama, and then on the perspective of Hammīra's queens,

[63] I discuss the subversive effect of Ulugh Khan's scam at more length in the next chapter, in section 5.4.

voiced through his daughter Devalladevī.[64] The conflict revolves around different views on *dharma,* the right thing to do. Hammīra will equate *dharma* with the pursuit of fame. By contrast, his family – his brother and daughter - will remind him of his primary duty as a king, that is, prevent the kingdom from going to ruins.

To make sense of Hammīra's responses it is important to first explain the setting. Both conversations ensue from Ratipāla's treason. As explained in the previous chapter, Alauddin had chosen to invite Hammīra's favorite general to his encampment, after Time (*kāla*), arriving as the monsoon rains, had nearly drained away the Śaka camp. Instead of falling into despair Alauddin is cast as the master trickster (*māyāvin*) who employs his unfailing trickery (*kūṭa*) to win over Ratipāla, "Protector of (sexual) Pleasure" to his side by means of false promises, flattery, alcohol and sex. Ratipāla thus returns to the Chauhan camp as a traitor and drunkard, still smelling of alcohol and sex. He carries a message for Hammīra containing "words that awaken conflict" (*virodhôdbodhinīr vāco,* 13.82).

I want to suggest that the deceitful message of Ratipāla/Alauddin contains three 'tricks'. But to Hammīra, Ratipāla's speech will come across as a series of useless, and disturbing points of information (presented by his beloved, trustworthy general). Ratipāla's speech thus starts by voicing Alauddin's complaint that the 'the fool' (*mūḍhaḥ*) Hammīra didn't give his daughter to Alauddin: he will therefore continue the siege until he captures the beloved women "of him, who doesn't give away his daughter" (*putrīm ayacchato 'muṣya*, 13.84).[65] This emphasis on Hammīra's unwillingness to give away his daughter is important. In HMK, the conflict does not revolve around Hammīra's compassionate choice to protect the Mongol refugees, and his refusal to hand hem over. Second, Ratipāla says that Alauddin's armies and resources are inexhaustible (13.85-86). This is the first trick. It can be understood as a lie about the actual despair in Alauddin's camp, following the destructive effects of Time's deadly monsoon rains (13.68). This point seems intended to plant the seed for Hammīra's later despair. After all, the type of war Hammīra and Alauddin are engaged is a struggle against time. Which side will succumb to exhaustion and despair first? The encircled fort, or the encampment? The problem of

[64] Her name may be meant as an intertextual reference to a Persian story about the possibility of marriage between Hindu and Turk. In contrast to Michael Bednar (2007: 208n369) who notes: "It is tempting to identify Hammira's daughter, Devalla Devī, with Deval (or Duwal) Rani in Amir Khusrau's *Devāl Rānī va Khiẓr Khān*. This identification would be in error, as Amīr Khuṣrau clearly states that Devāl Rānī was the daughter of Bhoja (III), the king of Gujarat." I believe the name Devalladevī might be intended as a deliberate allusion to such stories. Many 'Rajput texts', seem to purposefully recycle names from other, related narratives in a complex intertextual conversation. I return to this point in the final chapter.

[65] This point might be suggestive of Hammīra's stubborn refusal to pay tribute or communicate with the Delhi Sultanate. Hammīra is not the type of king who will bestow his daughter on Alauddin to establish an alliance (and show his subservience). This point thus transforms into a 'rumor' spreading in the fort, saying that Alauddin *only* wants Hammīra's daughter.

exhaustion can be understood both in terms of the physical exhaustion of the troops and the exhaustion of resources like food.[66] Ratipāla's 'trick' consists in lying about Alauddin's de facto disadvantage, the actual despair in his camp following the monsoon rains (13.67-68). The second lie - and trick - is that Ratipāla pretends that Alauddin's final words were:

> "Damn you! Go away from here! What the Creator will do, that will *certainly* happen!"[67]

Basically, Ratipāla only pretends that there is no useful information. Importantly, this wrongly implies that Alauddin has the advantage: his camp remains unaffected by the war. But this is a lie. We could say that Ratipāla or Alauddin is actually planting the idea in Hammīra's mind that nothing can change the circumstances: the Maker/Creator or Fate (*karttā*) will decide what happens. In other words, Hammīra is tricked by his favorite general to subscribe to a fatalistic conception of time. Even though the time as the destructive monsoon rains had sided with Hammīra's cause to destroy the enemy encampment, Alauddin cleverly fights back, making use of Time's own internal deceptive logic, its *kūṭa* "trickery". As explained earlier, the trickster (*māyāvin*) king Alauddin indeed lives by deceit (*kūṭôpajīvinaḥ*, 13.72). Alauddin *masters his fate.* He comes up with a deceitful plan to make his opponent despair and take inconsiderate, hasty actions.

There is indeed a third point in Ratipāla's 'conflict awakening speech'. It is, however, not recognized by Hammīra as part of what Alauddin made Ratipāla say. Ratipāla tells Hammīra to visit and 'please' his other general Raṇamalla, who is "angry for some reason" (*ruṣṭaḥ kenâpi hetunā*, 13.88). For the reader it is immediately clear that the three deceiving 'points' or tricks end here. It is made explicit by the short intervening thought: "Of which substance is that Śaka king made? (*kiṃmātro 'sau śakeśvara*).[68] The role of Alauddin, the trickster (*māyāvin*), can be said to end here. Importantly, Hammīra is given a chance to detect the deceit, and literally 'smell' Ratipāla's treason. He is aided by his younger brother Vīrama, who stood nearby, and explains to his brother in crystal clear terms that Ratipāla has conspired with the enemy.

> Oh king! On his return a smell of liquor (*mada*) came from his mouth.
> Therefore I know certainly that this most wicked man has united with the enemy.
> Noble birth, good conduct, wisdom, shame, self-respect, loyalty,

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[66] This is made explicit in the beginning of the twelfth canto, where Hammīra boasts about the inexhaustible provisions in his fort (12.4). This is also an important theme in Padmanābha's *Kānhadade-prabnadha* and Jayasi's *Padmāvat*.

[67] ...tvaṃ re prayāhi yat karttā karttā tad bhavitā dhruvam, 13.87.

[68] The answer to this question might be something like: trickery, or Time's power of illusion (*māyā*) itself. And Hammīra, tricked into subscribing to a passive view on fate, will indeed fall in the trap and gradually slumber into defeat in the course of two long, *sleepless* days.

truthfulness and purity: nowhere do they arise in a drunkard.[69]

Vīrama elaborates in two other verses about the effect of alcohol or madness (*mada*), and then urges Hammīra to put him to the sword "like a sheep" (*meṣavat*): the Śaka king would go away, having undertaken something fruitless (*niṣphalârambhaḥ, 13.97*). But it seems that Ratipāla's deceitful message has affected Hammīra more profoundly than Vīrama's clarification about Ratipāla's betrayal. (The whole passage clearly echoes Vīranārāyaṇa's refusal to listen to the truth revealing 'bee-like' speech of Vāgbhaṭa, who similarly tried to prevent the king from listening to the deceitful message of Jalaluddin, discussed at the end of chapter two). Hammīra thus sips in Vīrama's speech (*vācam ācamya*), stops just a moment (*viśramya kṣaṇam*) – he therefore doesn't give it much thought -, and then utters this 'immortal' response, literally speech that "robbed the fame from the nectar of immortality" (*vañcitâmṛta-cañcutām*, 13.98).[70]

"At some moment in time the sun rises up even from the west,
but a fort which is under attack *may not remain*. This is my view (*matiḥ*).
Because when he (Ratipāla) is killed and the fort is destroyed by fate (*daivataḥ*),
who indeed will be able to stop the following gossips from the people:
"For sure, our king, together with his family, must be insane (*dur-matiḥ*)
when he, without even deliberating about it, killed Ratipāla."
When he (Ratipāla) is alive in this fort, how will the Śakas play around?
When there is a lion, would anyone gamble in his cave?
A family member, even though being tormented, does not forsake his nobility.
Does the Aloe tree, even though being burned, lose its fragrance?[71]
As there would have been a *Hanūmadayanam* "The Ways of Hanuman", if he (Rāvaṇa?) was conquered by him (Hanumān?), in the same way, when he is killed, there will be a *Ratipālāyanam* "The Ways of Ratipāla" on earth.[72]

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[69] niryato 'sya mukhād rājan mada-gandhas tathā yayau |
jāne yathâiṣa pāpīyān niścitaṃ saṃgato dviṣaḥ ||13.93||
kulaṃ śīlaṃ matir lajjâbhimānaḥ svāmibhaktā |
satyaṃ śaucaṃ ca na kvāpi jṛmbhate madyapāyini ||13.94||

[70] Nayacandra might be exposing Hammīra's famous words as a somewhat cliché expression, see Tawney's translation of Merutuṅga's *Prabandhacintāmaṇi* (1901: 187-188) where this expression is used in another context.

[71] This verse is only in the older Kota manuscript. But it is clearly 'original', for its message resonates strongly with a later verse in the canto 13.143, as discussed later.

[72] The idea of this verse is a bit unclear to me. There seems to be a meta-poetic touch here. I believe it suggests that Hammīra imagines Ratipāla to be like Rāma's most devoted friend and general Hanuman, making himself someone like Rāma. If Hanumān would have conquered Rāvaṇa, people would be telling the story of the "Ways of Hanumān" (*Hanūmadayanam*) and not the "Ways of Rāma". But since Rāma killed Rāvaṇa, we now have Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇam.* Similarly, if Ratipāla, Hammīra's 'devoted general', will kill

Therefore, refrain from this. What has to happen, let that happen.
Because even fierce men like Rāvaṇa could not stop what ought to be. [73]

Hammīra gives several reasons for *not* killing his beloved general Ratipāla – recall that to the reader this name sounds something like Mr. Protector of Pleasure. He first reasons that the fort *may* fall at some point. Therefore, if *by fate or chance* (*daivataḥ*) this happens, the people might start gossiping, and link the kingdom's destruction to Hammīra's act of killing a man who might be innocent, without deliberating (*vi-mṛś.*) about it. Hammīra would lose his good name. We can understand the notion of fate (*daiva*) here as the idea of 'chance'. In the game-like logic of war there's always a chance that the fort may fall, when it's under siege. But Hammīra still believes he may be on the winning side. And somehow he still is – if he would do something about this traitor. Hammīra believes that killing a man like Ratipāla, who *may* have committed treason, can only give him a bad name in the future, in the *possible* but still uncertain case that the fort falls.

Hammīra, at first, seems neither certain about his own defeat, nor about the treason of his beloved general Ratipāla. But then he goes on to reason that Ratipāla *cannot* be a traitor. After all, he reasons, he came back to the fort, so how can he be a traitor? As long as we have this lion-like Ratipāla in the fort, how can the Śakas play or shine (*vilasanti* and *dīvyati,* 13.102) in his fort? Furthermore, Ratipāla is a noble man, from his own clan, how can this fragrance of nobility (*kulīnatvam*) go away? Then he appears to compare his beloved general to Rāma's devoted general Hanumān. This is similar to how earlier Hammīra had foolishly imagined his relationship with Dharmasiṃha to be like the bond between the firm Śiva and his bull. In the same vain, Hammīra now imagines himself to be a Rāma-like figure, supported by a Hanumān-like Ratipāla. He may therefore still be

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Alauddin, there will be a *Ratipālāyanam* on this earth. Later Hammīra poems are similarly called *Hammīrāyaṇa,* after the story of Rāma.

[73] udeti kāle kasmiṃścit pratīcyām api bhāskaraḥ |
bhajyamānaṃ paraṃ durgam na tiṣṭhed iti me matiḥ ||13.99||
tad asmin nihate jāte durga-bhaṅge ca daivataḥ |
lokān iti prajalpākān niroddhuṃ katamaḥ kṣamaḥ ||13.100||
dhruvaṃ saparivāro 'pi durmatir vibhūr eva naḥ |
yad evam avimṛśyâiva ratipālam prajaghnivān ||13.101||
jīvavaty atra durge 'smin vilasantîti kiṃ śakāḥ |
pārīndre sati kiṃ tasya guhāyāṃ ko'pi dīvyati ||13.102||
kulīnaḥ pīḍyamāno 'pi kulīnatvaṃ na muñcati |
agurur dahyamāno 'pi saurabha kiṃ niśumbhati ||*|| (this verse is only found in Koṭā manuscript.
hanūmadayanaṃ yadvad abhaviṣyaj jite 'munā |
hate 'tra bhavitā tadvad ratipālâyanaṃ kṣitau ||13.103||
viramyatāṃ tad etasmād bhāvyam asti yad astu tat |
rāvaṇâdibhir apy ugrair na bhāvyaṃ rurudhe yataḥ ||13.104||

able to conquer the Rāvaṇa-like Śaka king. Then comes the last argument. As if echoing Ratipāla's last lie, Hammīra believes that the future is fixed. Hammīra appears to have literally sipped in Ratipāla vision that there's nothing to do: 'what the Creator will do, that will *certainly* happen'.

From the readers perspective, these arguments sound flawed. Hammīra doesn't seem to realize that his favorite general Ratipāla, 'his rutting elephant' (10.63), no longer has his "fragrance" (*saurabha*) of family loyalty. As Vīrama explained to him, Ratipāla actually "smells like intoxication", "his treason is *certain*" (*mada-gandhas...niścitaṃ saṃgato,* 13.93). We are affected by a deep sense of dramatic irony. Hammīra's reasoning sounds like ignorance or insanity. Hammīra fears to be blamed, to be called wicked (*dur-mati,* 13.101) by choosing the side of someone who returned to his camp as a wicked man (*dur-matiḥ,* 13.82). To the reader, and Hammīra's brother Vīrama – whose senses are not numbed – it is crystal clear that Ratipāla is a traitor. We know that it is Ratipāla who is "gambling" (*dīvyati*, 13.102) in the Chauhan kingdom. As in the previous cantos, the parallel with the *Mahābhārata* dice-game is clearly suggested. The reader has earlier learned that Kali - the personification of the present, degenerate age of conflict – had seized the fort-like-mind of Ratipāla, becoming like (the gambler) Śakuni to the Śaka king (13.80). As always, to Hammīra this is not clear. He still believes his own story looks more like the Rāmāyaṇa. As earlier he didn't see how "one blind man" is playing dice (*dīvyati,* 10.28) in his kingdom, he now again fails to notice what is actually happening in his kingdom. Once again, we get the impression that Hammīra's kingship is exemplifying the degenerative logic of the dark *kaliyuga.*

Hammīra's decision to *not act*, brings the deceitful plan of Alauddin – or the degenerative working of the *kaliyuga* - to fruition. Now the rest of Ratipāla's conflict-awakening speech can do its work. Immediately after Hammīra's response, we learn that the rumor (*vārtā*) spread in the fort that Alauddin requested the king *only* for his daughter (13.105). The poet seems to use this element as an opportunity to let the women speak up against their king, and remind Hammīra, through his daughter, about his duties as a protector of the kingdom, and the importance of securing the continuation of the Chauhan clan.

> And from then, nudged by the king's wives, who instructed her, his daughter named Devalladevī went to the king and explained to him: "Oh Oh! Dear father, why do you lead the kingdom (*rājya*) to ruin for my sake: does anyone let the palace collapse for the sake of a little peg? What can sons do, even when they're many? How much less a daughter! It is only for the sake of another (*parârtham*) that she grows up, day by day as if she were Lady Insignificant (*kṣudra-śrīr*).[74] The fact that by giving me away the complete kingdom can be held steady (*sthiram*) for a long time, is that not like saving the wish-fulfilling jewel by giving away a piece of glass? Everywhere it is better to

[74] I thank Eva De Clercq for the apt suggestion to translate this as Lady Insignificant.

have a living daughter than a dead one. We see those who live return again, but not the dead. A clever man would act, observing what's good for him: this is good policy (*nītiḥ*). Therefore, what many good things would not arise for you, when you give me away? You'll have such a king as son-in-law, happiness, the protection of your land. Why say more? For, on top of that all, as it is said (*kila*), you'll have us too. Vākpati[75] said that good policy (*nīti*) means giving up one for the sake of the clan. So when you give me away in order to protect the flourishing kingdom, then what loss is there for you? Therefore, fix your mind on the truth (*tattve*), and do what is suitable to the occasion. And do not shut down my words! Give me to the Śaka king![76]

This speech is important. It provides a powerful counter-perspective to the Rajput king's idea of honor. The queens do not want to die (or sacrifice themselves for Hammīra's fame). Hammīra will of course shut down their words. But before turning to his reply, I want to briefly reflect on the arguments raised by his daughter, or by the queens who have nudged her to approach Hammīra with this speech on policy (*nīti*). We can understand this lecture as a *reminder* of the king's primary duty as a protector of the kingdom (*sva-kṣiti-rakṣaṇam*, 13.112), to keep it stable (*sthiram*) for a long time (*ciram*) (13.109). From the women's perspective it is not problematic that Hammīra's daughter would become the wife of the Śaka king. After all, the argument goes, his daughter forms only just a very small part of the kingdom's fortune: she is of minute Splendor (*kṣudra-śrīr*), for she can only grow up "for the sake of another" (*parârtham*) (13.108). She is a 'Lady Insignificant', whose value is nothing compared to the all-important objective of maintaining Lady Royal Fortune (*rājya-śrī*). Giving away one's daughter is indeed the

[75] The legendary preceptor of the Gods, "Lord of Speech", who is said to have authored many works, including works on policy.

[76] itaś ca rāja-patnībhir anuśāsya praṇoditā |
putrī devalladevîti gatvā bhūpaṃ vyajijñapat ||13.106||
hā hā tāta mad-arthaṃ kiṃ rājyaṃ viplāvayasy adaḥ |
kiṃ kīlikârthaṃ prāsādaṃ prapātayati kaścana ||13.107||
prabhūtā api putrāḥ kiṃ kuryuḥ pūrvaṃ tato 'ṅgajā |
parârtham eva vardheta yā kṣudra-śrīr ivânvaham ||13.108||
mat-pradānena sāmrājyaṃ ciraṃ yat kriyate sthiram |
tat kāca-khaṇḍa-dānena rakṣā cintāmaṇer na kim ||13.109||
parāsor yatra kutrâpi jīvantī tanujā varam |
dṛṣṭā hi punarâvṛttir jīvatāṃ na gatâyuṣām ||13.110||
nītiḥ svahitam ālocya kāryaṃ kuryād vicakṣaṇaḥ |
tat tāta mayi dattāyāṃ kiṃ kiṃ bhāvi na te hitam ||13.111||
jāmātā bhūpatis tādṛk sukhaṃ sva-kṣitirakṣaṇam |
khalûktvā bahu sarveṣāṃ vayam api kilôpari ||13.112||
tyajed ekaṃ kulasyârthe nītir ity āha vākpatiḥ |
trātum āvardhitakṣamāṃ māṃ dadatas tava kā kṣatiḥ ||13.113||
tan nidhehi dhiyaṃ tattve vidhehi samayocitam |
pidhehi mā ca mad-vākyaṃ śakêndrāya pradehi mām ||13.114 ||

natural way of making alliances (and establish peace) with neighboring or rivalling kingdoms. Importantly, it doesn't matter from the women's perspective whether the king is a Śaka – someone with foreign origins - or not. Hammīra would be able to preserve everything, not only the Fortune of the kingdom, but also his daughter. The real gem, worth protecting, is the kingdom (*rājya*) itself. From the women's perspective (as presented by Nayacandra), this is the truth (*tattva*) to which Hammīra should direct his mind.

From Hammīra's perspective, however, the only thing that matters is the acquisition of fame by protecting one's family honor. In his view, making an alliance with the Śaka king through marriage is a blameworthy violation of his honor. I hope it may suffice to quote just one part of his speech, which sums up his view: [77]

> Oh daughter, what you said: "When I'm given away, how many good things would not come to you?", that too sprang from your childish play! Come on! What good can be gained from giving you to the Śaka, who is completely despicable, that most wicked cow-eater? [There will be] the drum of ignominy (*a-yaśaḥ*) in this world, misfortune in the other world, and the violation of the clan's good customs. Shame upon the life of such a man! A good minded man (*sudhīḥ*), having obtained the precious existence of man, should acquire these two things only: fame and dharma. These two together result from protecting the clan's good customs.

Hammīra's refutation of the women's standpoint makes sense from his tragic perspective. There is only fame to be gained and blame to be prevented. Indeed, the heroic quality that made Hammīra (in)famous was precisely his stubborn resistance to Sultanate power, his unwillingness to bend his head. It made him different from other kings who were also defeated by Alauddin.[78]

However, in the context of the poem – or in the early fifteenth century political world – this reasoning may sound heroic, but also stupid. Overall Hammīra's reasoning sounds contradictory or shortsighted in the context of what happened before and what will happen next. He dismisses the women's speech on political wisdom (*nīti*) as arising from childish play (*bāla-līlônmīlitam*, 13.122). But to the reader the king's own arguments may

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yad ūce mayi dattāyāṃ kiṃ kiṃ bhāvi na te hitam |
tad etad api te bālalīlônmīlitam aṅgaje ||13.122||
sarvātmanā nikṛṣṭāya pāpiṣṭhāya gavāśine |
śakāya tvayi dattāyāṃ kuto hanta hitârjanam ||13.123||
ayaśaḥ-paṭaho loke paraloke ca durgatiḥ |
svakulâcāra-vidhvaṃso dhik nṛṇāṃ jīvitaṃ tataḥ ||13.124||
durlabhaṃ nṛbhavaṃ prāpya dvayam evârjayet sudhīḥ |
kīrtiṃ dharmaṃ ca tau samyak-kulâcāra-prapālanāt ||13.125||

[78] See my discussion of this point in the last chapter, section 5.3 and 5.7.

seem childish – as earlier when Pṛthvīrāja deemed Shahabuddin to be fickle and arrogant like a child (3.52). Here, Hammīra's vision appears to be grounded in a stubborn and somewhat delusional vision about the connection between fame and what Hammīra sees as his most important duty (*dharma*), not the protection of his realm or continuation of the clan, but the protection of his pride and honor. Heidi Pauwels has observed something similar in a historical poem by Keśavdās, where the warrior protagonists take pains to propagate "the view that they are not losers to be ridiculed but fighters for dharma."[79]

In Hammīra's view, making an alliance with the Śaka king through marriage is a blameworthy violation of his honor, and that of the Chauhan dynasty. In his opinion the 'foreign' Śakas are internally wicked by nature. It would violate the purity of the clan. Worthy of note is how Hammīra only speaks of Alauddin as a Śaka, whereas his daughter speaks of him as a king (*bhūpati,* 13.112), and therefore a worthy son-in-law. In short, Hammīra is of the opinion that a good minded man (*sudhīḥ*) should only secure fame (*kīrti*) and *dharma*, which in his vision equals the preservation of 'clan purity', based on a view about the supposedly (!) inherent low nature of the Śakas.

But it is precisely this point of view that drives Hammīra's tragedy to its completion, as I show in the final two sections. Nayacandra will present Hammīra's erroneous view about the 'inherent lowness' of the Mongol foreigners as the final catalyst in the tragic process leading to the destruction of his dynasty. Indeed, the possible union or alliance between indigenous clans and 'foreign' clans is what the Hammīra legend is all about. Even his own name, and that of his 'fictional' elder brother Suratrāṇa point to the possibility of admiration of and assimilation with the "other".[80] Hammīra will come to realize too late what Bhojadeva earlier expressed in his stream of thoughts, that friendship or enmity depends on how one acts alone, not on the grounds of family relations and their 'purity'.[81] Hammīra's own legend – with its core revolving around the way the neo-Muslim Mahimāsāhi proves his loyalty to Hammīra– indeed thwarts the very idea Hammīra seems to defend here.[82] But Nayacandra brings this message in his own unique and subversive way. Hammīra will come to realize that the "other" is very much like himself, or indeed superior to him. His view here is potentially 'outdated', or at least not desired by those who inhabit his kingdom. Hammīra is somehow stuck in the past, while fearing future blame and ridicule.

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[79] Pauwels (2009: 199-200) in an article on discourses of bhakti and loyalty in sixteenth-century vernacular historical epics. The quote refers to her discussion of Keśavdās' Ratan-bāvanī.

[80]Nayacandra must have been aware of the Persianate origin of our hero's own name, Hammīra, the Sanskritization of the Arabic word for chief Amīr, which came to denote more generally a strong military commander and worthy opponent, see Finbarr Flood(2009: 255-259, a section called 'The fate of Hammīra') for an elaborate discussion of the use of the title "Hammīra".

[81] As discussed in the beginning of the previous section.

[82] See Bednar 2017 for a discussion of the Mongol Mahimāsāhi as a Neo-Muslim, a recent convert to Islam, as they were called in Persian texts of the time.

Hammīra's position is always subtly presented as deriving from fear to be blamed on earth after his death, or by his own predecessors whom he will have to confront in heaven (13.126-128) Hammīra, however, is unaware of the patterns of his past, the Chauhan past, and his future – as modelled by Nayacandra. This is perhaps part of the tragic human condition, to be blind to the past, and the future. At this moment Hammīra doesn't know yet that he will be the last Chauhan king. How will he explain to his predecessors, that with his kingship the famous branch of the Śākambharī Chauhans comes to an end? Let's recall how Hammīra was urged by his father to *maintain* Royal Fortune. He admonished his son to not start a conflict (*kali*) with the more powerful Śaka king, who like Viṣṇu, employs "shining/playing deceit" (*lasac-chalena*, 8.103). At the same time, Hammīra was also told by his court poet that he can please his father with his fame alone (8.130). But how do you acquire fame, and in which conditions does it turn into infamy? The topic of fame – as a vain pursuit - is clearly a major interest of Nayacandra.

Throughout HMK a fearful obsession with fame and preventing blame is presented as an integral part of the 'fearless' warrior-code. For example, one of Pṛthvīrāja's allies, the warrior Udayarāja arriving too late at battle which no longer can be won, argues that *he cannot go away*, for "then Shame will obtain free play in my Gauḍa clan" (*krīḍāṃ vrīḍā kalayati tadā gauḍa-gotre sukhaṃ me,* 3.68). The irony HMK's author is constantly trying to convey, I believe, is that this obsession with heroic chivalry, pride, honor and fame not only makes Royal Fortune go away, it is also the attitude that is casting dark spots of blame on the clan's name. For example, Nayacandra makes characters like Ratipāla literally spread Hammīra's fame (10.61).[83] Put differently, the measures Hammīra takes and doesn't take to save his name and honor are causing exactly what he tries to prevent, namely to be remembered as a fool (*dur-matir*), or even a wicked man. And he will soon realize this, at least partially and momentarily, in a brief moment of tragic hindsight (like the classical Greek *anagnorisis*). But he will immediately point out someone else as the real scapegoat, deserving to be blamed for the destruction of his clan.

4.6 Waking the sleepless: the roaring/humming of the warrior-king

I have hinted occasionally at several recurring paradoxes surrounding the heroism of the Chauhan warrior(-kings). The fearless warrior appears to be driven by a fear to be blamed

[83] I discussed this briefly in the previous section.

and shamed for not being 'heroic', valorous or manly enough. They literally fight for the "warrior's vow" (*vīra-vratam*), to prevent it from becoming 'dissolved' as Mahimāsāhi put it when he asked Hammīra permission to punish the 'ungrateful' but pure-minded Bhoja. This resonates with Hammīra's unjust punishment of the wise Dharmasiṃha, "Lion Dharma". This wise and righteous man was not deemed manly enough by the Chauhan king. Accused of blindness and lacking masculinity (*puṃstvam*), Hammīra humiliated him in public, and had his eyes and testicles removed. Both scenes however subtly revealed the mental blindness and de facto impotence of heroic masculinity. The Chauhan 'heroes' are seemingly always bursting or quivering with valor (*sphurid-vikrama,* 1.26), a point from the introduction that is repeated throughout the poem. Ultimately, however, this may betray an inner passivity or sleepiness. As discussed two sections earlier, in the words of Alauddin - or Nayacandra, speaking through him? – the Chauhan warriors are driven by an "itching desire" (*kaṇḍūla*) to kill. A maddening lust is awake in them, making them tremulous, restless, fickle or shaking (*capala, tarala, cañcala*), perhaps forgetting that firmness (*sthairyam*) is the name of the game of fame (*kīrti-keli*). Like the lovers who are excessively obsessed with erotic play, the warrior too is fated to become fatally exhausted because of his love for war. For the warrior, as for the lover, there is never time for sleeping off the exhaustion of martial/erotic pleasure.[84] As often in (Sanskrit) poetry, throughout HMK the martial sphere overlaps with that of the erotic, and vice versa. For Nayacandra the martialization of sex and the eroticization of war may serve to hint at the shared (and potentially fatal) aftereffect of *over*indulging in sexual and martial pleasure: over-exhaustion.[85]

In brief, obsessed with martial lust and posthumous fame, the warrior appears to suffer from a condition of sleeplessness. His quivering infatuation with violence is making warriors restless, unsteady, shaky. Nayacandra presents this as a fatal state of self-destruction. It can be compared to the fascinating image in the *suprabhātam* in the eighth canto, where a verse imagines the flickering flames of the lanterns, shaking heavily before they 'die' from exhaustion, "as if they are endowed with a quivering exhaustion" (*visphurita-pramīlā iva*, 8.6). Similar paradoxical imagery recurs in the crucial episode

[84] I got insight into this central theme in HMK through David Shulman's discussion of Aja's sleepiness in *Raghuvaṃśa* (2014: 49), where he mentions how the commentator Mallinātha explains about a particular verse that "[k]ings, like thieves and lovers, tend to be sleepless."

[85] This is made explicit in one of the concluding verses of the erotic descriptions of canto seven (7.127). Here the nightly lovemaking and the resulting wounds of lip bites and nail marks are imagined as a couple's adherence to the true hero's vow (*nirvyāja-vīra-vrate*). But the effect of this heroic vow (of love and war) is that it leads to a fatal exhaustion. Nevertheless, the verse describes sleep (*nidrāṃ*) as the fortunate, beautiful or pleasing effect of "union" or "battle" (*saṅga-subhagāṃ*), the sexual or martial coming together (*saṃ-ga*). But the resulting sleepiness in fact entails that the warrior-lover is always in a state of sleeplessness. This theme is typically linked to the traditional story of Pṛthvīrāja, and his rival Jayacandra, whose fatal-love addiction is the topic of his play Rambhāmañjarī. And it is clearly implicit in Hammīra's story.

where Hammīra's tragedy unfolds to a point of no return. Again, this happens in a *suprabhātam* verse from the royal bard who tries to wake up the sleepless king, in vain. Indeed, how do you wake up someone who doesn't sleep?

Let me first describe the context. Toward the end of canto thirteen, after Hammīra's refutation of his daughter's arguments, the role of the traitor Ratipāla gradually comes to an end. Through the treacherous scheme of this "very wicked" (*pāpīyān*, 13.93) man – to use Vīrama's words, resonating later in Hammīra's assessment of Alauddin as the "most wicked" man (*pāpiṣṭhāya*, 13.123) – Hammīra causes his other general Raṇamalla to leave his service and join the enemy camp. After Raṇamalla's departure, Ratipāla too leaves the kingdom. Curiously, when Hammīra finally beholds the treason of his beloved general Ratipāla he doesn't yet get the expected insight about his ignorance. Nayacandra introduces another significant character, a man named Jāhaḍa, who is responsible for overseeing the food storage. It is this man, whom Hammīra will later index as the scapegoat, the most stupid man who will be beheaded "at the command of the sleepless king" (*nir-nidra-bhūpālâdeśāt*, 13.194). The problem of sleeplessness is introduced way earlier, right after Hammīra witnesses the betrayal of Ratipāla and Raṇamalla. Let us consider this crucial scene.[86]

> Seeing the behavior of both men, he murmured: "Shame upon you dark age (*kali*)!". The king then asked Jāhaḍa: "How much food is left in storage?"[Jāhaḍa thought] "If I say that there is nothing, then for sure there may be peace." Because he felt that this is the goal of the future, he answered: "Not much". Even if he does the right thing (*hita*), when a fool acts boldly (*pragalbhate*), it leads to the opposite (*ahita*) alone. Does this maxim not clearly watch over Jāhaḍa?

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[86] tayos tac ceṣṭitaṃ dṛṣṭvā kaliṃ dhik kalayann ayam |
kośe 'nnaṃ kiyad astîti nṛpaḥ papraccha jāhaḍam ||13.136||
vadāmi yadi nāstîti tadā saṃdhir bhaved dhruvam |
bhāvy-artha-bhāvād dhyātvêti jagau na kiyad ity asau ||13.137||
kurvann api hitaṃ mūrkho 'hitāyâiva pragalbhate |
atrôdāharaṇam vyaktaṃ kiṃ na paśyata jāhaḍam ||13.138||
tad-girā cintayâcānto bhūkānto 'bhyetya mandiram |
uccandre vigalat-tandraś cetasîti vyacintayat ||13.139||
amānair api sanmānair dānais tai stair anekadhā |
pūjitau satkṛtau śaśvad yau mayā bhrātarāv iva || 13.140||
yadi tāv apy aho svāmi-droham evaṃ pracakratuḥ |
tadā svabhāva-nīcānāṃ pareṣāṃ gaṇanā 'stu kā ||13.141||
sājātyāt tasya saṃgamya riposś cen mudgalā amī |
niyamya mām adus tasya mahad bhāvi viḍambanam ||13.142||
yathā kathaṃcid arhās tad visraṣṭaṃ svapurād amī |
paraḥ premaparo 'py uccaiḥ paratvaṃ yan na muñcati ||13.143||

> Because of his words, the king was consumed by worries and went home when the moon was up. And, with his exhaustion disappearing, he thought: "Those two men, whom I worshipped with all those unlimited honors and gifts, of many kinds, I always treated them with respect, as if they were my brothers. Alas! If even they committed treason against their lord, how is it possible then, to count on others, who are low by nature (*svābhāva-nīcānāṃ*). If these Mongols, since they are of the same caste (*sājātyāt*), unite with the enemy, capture me, and hand me over to him, I will become a great object of mockery (*viḍambanam*)! Anyway, they should be sent from my city. For a foreign man, even though he has great love, does not abandon his 'otherness/hostility' (*paratvaṃ*).

Curiously, scholars have dismissed the crucial significance of this episode within the tragic plot of the poem.[87] But without a good understanding of the above passage, it is difficult to make sense of, and even appreciate the poem's tragic finale.

First of all, Hammīra clearly doesn't understand why his beloved generals betrayed him. He blames Kali (*kaliṃ dhik*, 13.136) the present dark age – or the degenerate spirit which had taken possession of Ratipāla, or Hammīra, whose kingship can be said to exemplify the darkness of the *kaliyuga*. Then, the important character Jāhaḍa is introduced. He will later put Hammīra to the final test. His 'lie' generates the conundrum that will leave the reader puzzled about who or what is really to blame. In some sense, his function is similar to that of Hammīra's brother Vīrama and his daughter Devalladevī earlier. All of them try to prevent the Chauhan king from causing the destruction of the kingdom. Like Devalladevī, he wants Hammīra to negotiate peace (*saṃdhir,* 13.137). But he adopts another strategy. He *lies* to Hammīra, wrongly thinking that the king – when the food is exhausted – would sue for peace, which is presented as the right thing to do. But unfortunately, his thoughtless, bold speech has the adverse effect. We know that bold Hammīra himself is not the kind of king who follows the rules of *nīti*. Perhaps Jāhaḍa– with his foolish but well-intended speech - can be said to function as yet another mirror

[87] Kirtane's influential paraphrase reverses the whole point, describing how Jāhaḍa, "fearing the loss of his influence, if he were to tell the truth to the king at that time, falsely answered that the stores would suffice to hold out for a considerable time. But scarcely had this officer turned his back when it became generally known that there was no more corn in the state granaries." (Kirtane: 1879: xxxvii.) Michael Bednar's recent reading of this episode (2007: 201-8) corrects Kirtane's misreading, but like Kirtane and other historiographical readings he tends to 'side' with Hammīra's perspective in his interpretation of the episode and leaves out the 'poetic chaff'. Both leave out the crucial verses about Hammīra's erroneous way of thinking, the bard's subsequent intervention, and the long-awaited moment of his tragic hindsight. Bednar portrays Jāhaḍa's response as "cowardly and self-serving" (p. 201), stating that he is the "last to betray Hammīra, and the individual Hammīra (or Nayacandra Sūri) ultimately blamed for the fall of Ranthambhor" (p. 207). It is indeed Hammīra who will blame him as the cause, from *his own* tragic, shortsighted and selfish perspective. I will stress the importance of not equating Hammīra's voice and perspective with that of the author.

image of Hammīra's own character. Perhaps the name Jāhaḍa is even meant to ring with the Sanskrit word for "stupid" *jaḍa* or *jāḍya* "stupidity".[88] I elaborate on these points later.

After the treason of his generals and Jāhaḍa's lie, the Chauhan king begins to despair, for the first time in the poem. He now 'knows' – wrongly though - that he doesn't have a chance anymore. He thinks he is disadvantaged: his fort is out of resources, and the enemy is hardly affected by the war, as he was tricked into believing by Ratipāla. Hammīra's despair leads to his final and fatal error of judgment. If his generals Ratipāla and Raṇamalla have betrayed him, *who were treated by him like brothers*, so Hammīra reasons, then for sure the foreign Mongols, *who are low and hostile by nature*, will betray him. Note the deep irony of this episode. His erroneous thoughts are indeed a continuation of his earlier tendency to mistake friend for foe, and vice versa. The stupidity of Hammīra's idea that "the 'other', even though he has great love, does not abandon his otherness/hostility" (*paraḥ premaparo 'py uccaiḥ paratvaṃ yan na muñcati*, 13.143) is tragically reinforced by Hammīra's earlier delusional statement that his beloved general, the traitor Ratipāla, "someone of a noble family, even when being tormented, does not abandon his 'nobility' (*kulīnaḥ pīḍyamāno 'pi kulīnatvaṃ na muñcati*, *).[89] Like earlier, Hammīra's delusional ruminations here are driven by the same fear to become remembered as a fool. He fears to become a great object of mockery (*mahad bhāvi viḍambanam*, 13.142).

Of crucial symbolic significance is the setting in which these delusional thoughts take place, namely in the middle of the night (the moon is up), when "his fatigue was disappearing" (*vigalat-tandraś,* 13.139) We learn that "in this interval" (*etasminn antare*, 13.144) – thus still during Hammīra's delusional flow of thoughts – some skilled bard (*māgadhaḥ*) stood nearby and recited two poems (*kāvya-dvayaṃ*) about the appearance of Dawn. In other words, we are told that Hammīra has been up all night, in a condition of sleeplessness considering the idea of sending away the Mongol refugees, for they might betray him and blemish his good reputation. As always, the bard's good morning verses (*suprabhātam*) are meant to wake up the 'sleepy' king. Like earlier in canto eight Hammīra has to wake up, not literally from sleep – he has not slept - but from his stream of delusional thoughts. The bard's intervention at this crucial moment is purposefully meant to widen the final tragic gap to an uncrossable extreme – unlike in the intertextual model of *Raghuvaṃśa,* where the Raghu heroes always manage to miraculously cross these gaps, and 'wake up' to restore the dynasty's Royal Fortune.[90]

[88]The name is curious and not found elsewhere.

[89] The verse is omitted in the edition, but listed as being present in the older Kota manuscript, as noted earlier in my discussion in the previous section.

[90] See my engagment with Shulman's analysis (2014) of *Raghuvaṃśa* in the previous chapter.

In the first verse (13.145) this skillful poet-bard imagines how the yogi or alchemist who is Time (*kāla-yogī*) forges the golden color of sunrise by melting together the mercury of the silver moon with the red 'paste of Dawn' (*pratyūṣa-kalkam*).[91] The typical shaming sting in the *suprabhātam* becomes apparent in the second verse, where we again learn about the paradoxical phenomenon of a vibrant, shaking and sleepy sleeplessness:

> Ah! Look! He has come, her lover, the sun!
> Touching her heavily on the heart with his fierce rays
> he woke her up.
> But it looks like she goes back to sleepiness...
> that Lotus Pond.
> The buzzing rows of bees
> slipping out of her flower buds
> make her shake
> as if she's an inexperienced girl.
> But as a mature woman
> she 'roars'![92]

The idea of this verse might not be clear from a first, quick reading, as often in *suprabhātam* verses. The verse describes a somewhat paradoxical effect when at dawn the rays of the sun make the lotus pond bloom. The flower buds open, attracting bees who fly in and out. Because of these bees, the whole lotus pond (*nalinī*) is shaking *and* buzzing, humming, or even roaring (*huṅ-kṛt,* literally "making '*hum'* sounds"). However, although the pond seems to be blooming and vibrating with life, the verse tells us that *actually* she is in a state of sleepiness or drowsiness (*nidrālutām*). Let me already note that the imagery of the lotus pond is fitting to the occasion, signaling one of the last tragic turning points. Throughout HMK the pond stands as a symbol for the Chauhan kingdom's vitality, its life-giving water, which is in constant danger of drying up, and its lotuses (the people) of withering away, *because* of the king's delusional speeches or thoughts.[93] But how to explain the paradox here? Why is the lotus pond, though awake, actually in a (fatal) state of drowsiness? And why does the Sun not succeed in waking her? Why does she – or the

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[91] The word *kalka* is meant to refer to a special kind of paste used by an alchemist, but has a clear pejorative connotation, as 'filth' or 'deceit, meanness, wickedness', perhaps thus signifying something like the 'wickedness of twilight' which the Alchemist of Time throws (*kṣiptvā*) in his crucible to forge the sun. Is this a subtle dig at Hammīra, who should wake up from his wicked thoughts, throw them away with the break of dawn, to reappear as the golden sun?

[92] āyātena vitanvatā hṛdi kara-sparṣaṃ bhṛśaṃ preyasô-
nnidratvaṃ gamitā 'pi tigma-rucinā yāntîva nidrālutām |
a-prauḍhêva saroja-kośa-vigalad-bhṛṅgâvalī-jhaṅkṛtaiḥ
sôtkampaṃ vitanoti paśya nalinī prauḍhâpy aho huṅkṛtim ||13.146||

[93] As in verse 8.127, discussed at the end of the previous chapter.

king -look like a trembling immature girl, un-blooming (*a-prauḍhā*), while in fact she is also or even (*api*) blooming and 'roaring' like a mature woman (*prauḍhā*).

The verse imagines the relationship between the rising sun and a lotus pond at daybreak as one between two lovers in the morning. The female lover – the lotus pond – is still sleepy and therefore doesn't *want* to wake up. She may be exhausted from the nightly love making with the bees, who, drunk on nectar, tend to get trapped in her lotus buds when they close. But in the morning, the bees slip out (*vigalat*). The moment the pond wants to sleep, her 'real lover' arrives to wake her up. The Sun (*tigma-rucinā*, "the one with a fierce splendor") uses his rays or hands (*kara*) to nudge his sleepy beloved into *un-nidratvaṃ* waking/blooming. Importantly, this word literally means "a state without sleepiness"[94], and therefore connotes a state of *sleeplessness*. This state is not the same as wakefulness. Indeed, the lotus pond goes back as it were to a state of sleepiness (*nidrālutām*). The fierce nudging of the sun (or poet) does not seem to work. Why is that?

The verse explains this by conjuring up the paradoxical effect of humming bees on the flowers, when they slip out (*vigalat*). On the one hand, their going in and out from the bud makes the whole pond tremble or shake (*utkampam*), as if the pond is *a-prauḍhā*, "not in bloom" or like "an immature, inexperienced girl". Inexperienced as she is, her body may be shaking or shivering from exhaustion. Or perhaps she is shaking to fight the drowsiness and stay awake, much like the tremulous lights in the *suprabhātam* in the eighth canto. But the pond is not only shaking *as if she were* an inexperienced girl, she is also making (loud?) humming sounds (*huṃ-kṛti*) because of the buzzing (*jhaṃ-kṛtaiḥ*) of the bees. Actually indeed the pond is not *a-prauḍhā* but *prauḍhā, "*in full bloom" or a mature lady, boldly protesting against her lover who *tries* to wake her up. But she refuses.

I believe that the point of the paradox is that the lotus pond – or Hammīra -, despite her apparent, 'outer' blooming, waking state (*unnidra*) and mature look (*prauḍhā*), is actually in a state of sleepy *sleeplesness*. From the outside she looks mature and wakeful, but she is, in fact, immature and sleepy. Like the sun nudges the lotus pond into blooming, the bard tries to nudge Hammīra into waking, with a sting. Both their efforts, however, are in vain. "Look!" (*paśya*) the bard proclaims to the sleepless king, who has been up all night. Even though (*api*) the lotus pond is awake – or sleepless, *unnidra* - and blooming, she acts – or you are acting - *like* an immature girl, trembling and shaking, vainly trying to fight the state of drowsiness. Paradoxically however, because she is actually mature, the pond simultaneously roars or hums (*huṅ-kṛti*). I translated it as she 'roars' to highlight the upcoming irony. The word will be repeated a bit later in this sense, as the warrior's proud roaring on the battlefield. It also fits with the meter of the verse, the "tiger's play" (*śārdūlavikrīḍita*), whose rhythmic pace playfully culminates in the pond's/Hammīra's

[94] Or even more literally, with the sleepiness 'up', meaning gone.

ambiguous roar. This is not a real lion's roar. The *huṃ*-making sounds as a protesting "humming" sound, a sleepy non-verbal complaint, produced by someone who stubbornly refuses to wake up.[95] This is why the Sun – the poet - has to nudge his lover - the king - repeatedly and strongly (*bhṛśam*). Hammīra, like the lotus pond, has no choice but to wake up at the break of day and 'bloom'. But they have to bloom without having slept (*un-nidra*). This, the verse suggests, is nothing like being awake. It is something like a drowsy state of delirium, resulting from a *lack of sleep*, making the pond/Hammīra utter a humming 'roar'.

This complex verse purposefully connects to the preceding and following imagery. Only a few verses earlier we learned that Hammīra's fatigue was disappearing (*vigalat-tandraś,* 13.139) as he stayed up all night to erroneously contemplate the betrayal of the Mongols. He is therefore now like the sleepless pond at dawn, with the bees slipping out (*vigalat*) of the lotus buds. A condition of sleeplessness makes them both shake and 'roar', or utter meaningless drowsy sounds.[96] Hammīra appears to have been 'pleased' by the beauty of the verse's meaning (*prītas tad-artha-cārimṇā,* 13.147). However, nothing changes in his former line of thought. As elsewhere in the poem, Hammīra's satisfaction is always misplaced, signaling a tragic reversal. The interruption of the bard didn't have any effect on Hammīra's mental state. The sleepless Hammīra thus still suspects the Mongols of treason. He therefore summons them, telling them that they are no real warriors. Only a real warrior is able to 'roar' on the battlefield.

> We desire to give up even our lives for the sake of our kingdom:
> This dharma of *kṣatriya*-warriors does not perish, even at the end of times.
> He alone is a *kṣatriya* who even at the end of his life is able to roar!
> Isn't it clear that in this world Suyodhana exemplifies this?
> You are foreigners! Therefore, it is not fit for you to stay in misfortune.
> Tell me wherever you wish to go. I will take you there.[97]

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[95] I owe this idea to Vidwan H.V. Nagaraja Rao.

[96] The idea is similar to a *suprabhātam*-like verse discussed at the end of the eighth canto, where Hammīra was urged to leave his meaningless babbling behind, compared to the charming but meaningless *kala-rava* of a goose in a pond (8.127), which is fated to dry up, as discussed in the previous chapter, in section 3.5.

[97] prāṇān api mumukṣāmo vayam ātma-kṣiteḥ kṛte |
kṣatriyāṇām ayaṃ dharmo na yugânte 'pi naśvaraḥ ||13.149||
sa eva kṣatriyaḥ prāṇânte 'pi yo huṃ-kṛto kṣamaḥ |
kiṃ nôdāhriyate vyaktam iha rājā suyodhanaḥ ||13.150||
yūyaṃ vaideśikās tad vaḥ sthātuṃ yuktaṃ na sâpadi |
yiyāsā yatra kutrâpi brūta tatra nayāmi yat ||13.151||

There's a deep irony in the 'fact' that Hammīra – in Nayacandra's version - didn't take actions to those who really betrayed him, like his 'Hanumān-like' general Ratipāla or the blinded 'bull-like' Dharmasiṃha. Note how Hammīra's vision has now shifted from a *Rāmāyaṇa* perspective on his own life story, to that of the more tragic *Mahābhārata* model. He evokes the ambiguous ideal of Duryodhana, the Kaurava king, the epic's main anti-hero, whose heroic death Hammīra cites as exemplary. It is not a coincidence that he names him Suyodhana "Good warrior", the less used, euphemistic rendering of his more common name Duryodhana "Bad warrior", even though both can be read to mean the opposite: "Hard to Fight" or "Easy to Fight". Regardless of how we interpret the ideal of Duryodhana/Suyodhana, these verses signal an important shift.

Of crucial importance for our evaluation of this episode – and the whole tragic plot - is that the Chauhan king is covering something up. He is somehow lying. Hammīra's decision to send the refugee Mongols away to a 'safe space' of choice *is not driven by his selfless compassion*, as, for example, in the roughly contemporary story of Vidyāpati. At the heart of this whole episode lies Hammīra's fear to become an object of great mockery. He suspects that the Mongols, these *foreigners* (*vaideśikās,* 13.151) as he calls them, will betray him. After all, he *actually* thinks they are inherently 'other' (*para*), potential enemies because they are "low by nature" (*svabhāva-nīcānāṃ*, 13.140), just like his real enemy, the Śaka king: they are of the same caste (*sājātyāt,* 13.142). He assumes they will betray him and turn him into a fool. He has been pondering about this decision the whole night. And therefore, the sleepless king feels he has to *act* now in order to prevent posthumous blame. In other words, the above lines are an *excuse* to send the Mongols away. It does not reflect the king's selflessness, his supposedly legendary courage (*sattva,* 1.9). This different framing is a recurrent strategy in Nayacandra's poem. Through a different contextualization of traditional elements, Nayacandra radically inverts and subverts the 'traditional' meaning of the Hammīra legend.[98]

But we know that Hammīra's argument is nonsense. In light of the preceding *suprabhātam,* it even sounds as nonsense. The bard's 'sting' in the *suprabhātam* purposefully resonates in Hammīra's erroneous speech. When claiming that "he alone is a *kṣatriya* who even at the end of his life is able to roar (*sa eva kṣatriyaḥ prāṇânte 'pi yo* ***huṅ-kṛto*** *kṣamaḥ*, 13.150), it may sound like an echo of the pond's drowsy humming (*huṅ-kṛti/jhaṃ-kṛti*) four verses earlier. In other words, we almost hear a sleepless and (therefore) drowsy king speaking. Hammīra denies the Mongol warriors the status of being real 'roaring' warriors. They are 'others', foreigners, potential enemies. But these fatal words will strike back at Hammīra. The Chauhan king will come to realize that the enemy 'other' is not lower, but superior to him. Hammīra becomes his enemy 'other'.

[98] I explain this in more detail in the next chapter, by highlighting how Nayacandra opposes the fate of the 'refugee' Bhojadeva with that of Mahimāsāhi, in section 5.4.

4.7 Becoming the enemy 'other'

Hammīra's error of judgment about the inherent 'otherness' (and hostility) of the Mongols brings the poem to its tragic climax, and finally leads to Hammīra's painful moment of recognition. It is here that we learn about Nayacandra's take on the connection between Hammīra's stubborn adherence to 'heroic vows' and the destruction of his kingdom, and the end of his dynastic line. The tragic finale revolves around Hammīra's shocking discovery of two lies (of Mahimāsāhi and Jāhaḍa), both revealing a painful truth about his own ignorance. Hammīra's own lie – a cowardly excuse, perhaps - therefore immediately strikes back, with dramatic consequences. I hope to show that the insight Hammīra gains from both shocking discoveries remains 'shaky', unclear, short-sighed, the vision of a fool. I will give a translation of the whole episode leading to Hammīra's two moments of insight. It starts with Mahimāsāhi's response to Hammīra's words which denied him, and his fellow Mongols, the status of being a real warrior (*kṣatriya*). Mahimāsāhi is clearly disturbed by the king's evaluation of his otherness.[99]

> The king's speech struck his heart like lightning. As he was falling down with stupefaction, it was as if his anger held him up. "Let it be so." Mahimā murmured, and he went to his house. He put his family to the sword, went back to the king and told him this:
> "Beloved king, [my] wife and charming queen, is in agony, longing to meet a brother like you. She told me this with a stammering voice: "Dear husband, we stayed for so many years in this house

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[99] nṛpasya vacasā tena vajreṇêva hato hṛdi | I take vajreṇêva from the Koṭa mss. instead of prāsenêva.
mūrcchayā prapatann uccair avaṣṭabdha iva krudhā ||13.152||
evam astv iti jalpāko mahimā 'bhyetya mandiram |
kuṭumbam asisāt kṛtvā nṛpaṃ gatvêdam abravīt ||13.153||
pāṇigṛhītī tvadbhrātur gantum utkaṇṭhitā 'py asau |
ilāvilāsinī kānta māmâhêti sagadgadam ||13.154|| I take kānta (voc.) from Koṭā mss. instead of kāntaṃ (acc.).
kāntâitāvanti varṣāṇi tasthivāṃso yad okasi |
apy āttânubhavaṃ nâivâsmārṣma śatru-parābhavam ||13.155||
yasya prasādaiḥ samprāpta-saukhya-lakṣair nirantaram |
abodhi nâpi tigmāmśur udito 'stamito 'tha vā ||13.156||
tam idānīm adṛṣṭvâiva yady evaṃ nātha gamyate |
paścāttāpa-hataṃ tarhi manaḥ kenôpaśāmyati ||13.157||
prasādyâgatya tat sadyo mandiram medinīpate |
svadarśanâmṛtaiḥ paścāttāpa-taptāṃ niṣiñcatām ||13.158||
evam abhyarthitas tena mahimāsāhinā vibhuḥ |
ālambya tadbhujādaṇḍaṃ sādaraṃ sānujo 'calat ||159||
āsādya tad-gṛhaṃ bhūpo yāvad antar viśaty asau |
kurukṣetram ivâdrakṣīt tāvat sarvaṃ tad-aṅganam ||13.160||
asṛkpūre śirāṃsīha śiśūnāṃ yoṣitām api |
taranty avekṣya mūrcchālaḥ kṣmāpālaḥ kṣmātale 'patat ||13.161||

that we didn't even remember that feeling we got from the humiliation of the enemy. Enormous happiness we received from his gracious deeds, all the time. We didn't even think about when the sun is risen or set! Oh lord, if I leave him now, in this way, without seeing him, then I will be struck with painful regret. Who will appease my mind?" Therefore, oh king, please yourself and come to our house today. May you, with the nectar drops from your appearance, besprinkle her, who is inflamed by regret.

This is how this Mahimāsāhi told his request to the king. And out of respect, the king, holding on to his arm like a staff, left together with his younger brother. The king reached his house and the moment he went inside, he saw that the whole courtyard was like the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. Looking down on the sea of blood, with in it the floating heads of his children and wives, the king – the protector of the earth – fainted and fell on the earth.

Let me pause here for a while. This is the first time Hammīra himself feels a shock. He loses the stability with which he prided himself earlier. It is the start of an interesting doubling or mirroring effect, which is already evident in this episode. A scene that starts with Hammīra's delusional speech or lie 'shocking' the foreigner Mahimāsāhi into stupefaction (*mūrcchayā,* 13.152), making him *almost* fall, transforms into a scene where the 'foreigner' conjures up a more effective lie and shocks the king into stupefaction (*mūrcchālaḥ*, 13.161), making him *actually* fall on the ground. Hammīra will indeed acknowledge him as the superior warrior, who is not only ready to sacrifice his own life, but also that of his wives and children, *and* is able to stand up straight in the middle of a *Mahābhārata*-like blood bath. In other words, with Ratipāla gone, Hammīra has found a new favorite warrior. Hammīra now knows what the reader knew all along, that Mahimāsāhi is his most devoted warrior. I will turn to Hammīra's emotional response below. Now I want to emphasize that all this comes as a shock.

I believe Nayacandra creates this scene to highlight the extremity of the "true warrior's vow" (*nirvyāja-vīra-vratam*), with which the heroes in his poem are obsessed. Nayacandra may want to show what this vow really entails, "undisguised" (*nir-vyāja*). Mahimāsāhi's sudden decision to slay his family shocks not only Hammīra, but also the reader. An interesting mirror game is introduced in this episode, which extends to the remainder of the penultimate canto. Mahimāsāhi's horrifying act clearly anticipates two subsequent massacres at the fort: the mass self-immolation (*jauhar*) of Hammīra's wives and daughter, and the slaughter inflicted by another important warrior from the Hammīra legend, a man named Jājā.[100] He is clearly not a central character in HMK.[101] Nayacandra makes this celebrated hero imitate Mahimāsāhi's 'heroic' act. Like

[100] Curiously, this episode is left out from Kirtane's paraphrase (1879), and Bednar's reading of this canto (2007).

[101] I discuss this point in the next chapter, where I argue that Vīrama (Hammīra's younger brother, perhaps a nod to Nayacandra's patron) takes over the centrality of his character.

Mahimāsāhi this warrior may have been a foreigner who is sent away, right after the *jauhar* of Hammīra's family. But he returns to the Chauhan king with the heads of his eight wives *and only son*, showing his devotion to Hammīra, like Rāvaṇa to Śiva (13.187-189). It looks like a shadow or echo of how Mahimāsāhi shockingly disproved Hammīra's delusions.

All this may actually come across as a competition for being the 'best warrior', the one, proving how devoted they are to Hammīra's cause. Like Hammīra – or any true warrior - Mahimāsāhi doesn't care for his life, nor that of his family. He almost literally lives for war, and the adherence to the warrior's vow. [102] He explained this dedication earlier in verse 10.65, when he wanted to punish the 'ungrateful' Bhojadeva, Hammīra's mistreated but wise and noble half-brother. We can feel the somewhat misplaced 'brotherly' love in this scene. Mahimāsāhi not only shocks Hammīra by slaying his own family, but 'tricks' him with royal flattery – a recurrent theme throughout the poem. He pretends that his 'beloved' wife cannot bear the separation from Hammīra, presenting her as being deeply enamored with Hammīra. But the passage, rather, betrays Mahimāsāhi's own love for Hammīra, and *the pain he felt* when his beloved king presented him as an 'other'.

Michael Bednar has discussed Mahimāsāhi's act as an act of heroism that is "*jauhar*-like in effect: the honor of his wife and even his daughter was preserved when he slew them with the sword."[103] Bednar is surely right in saying that this act is meant to anticipate the *jauhar* of Hammīra's women. But it is important to emphasize that this is not presented as something the women want themselves. The women (and children) do not get to speak, just like earlier Hammīra silenced his daughter. I explained earlier how they clearly didn't want to die for the sake of their king's pride. Struck by pain, stupor and anger, Mahimāsāhi kills 'his' beloved wife – perhaps Royal Fortune herself -, and uses her dead body to express his love and dedication to the Chauhan king.[104]

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[102] Cf. for example also how in the previous twelfth canto Hammīra, the supreme warrior (*kṣatrôttamo,* 12.6) proclaims to Alauddin that warriors desire nothing else but war (*āyodhanād aparam na*). Alauddin, who is cast as the supreme Śaka (*śakôttamaḥ*, 12.7) then praises the warrior's vow.

[103] Bednar 2007: 204.

[104] There seems to be a purposeful ambiguity about who his wife is. Interestingly, Mahimāsāhi's make-belief wife doesn't look like an ordinary wife. Actually she is not introduced as *his* own wife in 13.154, but without pronouns as *pāṇi-gṛhītī,* "the one who is taken by the hand", and as *this queen*, perhaps *the* Queen*, asau ilā-vilāsinī,* literally "the one who plays with or shines on the earth (*ilā*). The word *ilā* or *iḍā* is also associated with the flow of Speech. These words for wife or queen are conspicuous, with an audible emphasis on her playful charm, and the importance of not letting her hand slip away. The only other time in the poem when we hear similar words, is when king Jaitrasiṃha decided to give Royal Fortune to his son Hammīra. Thus in 8.55 Jaitrasiṃha, the king (*ilā-vilāsī*) convinced Hammīra to take the Royal Fortune (*nṛpatitva-lakṣmīm*). In 8.38 he explained the importance of pressing her hand (*sāmrājya-lakṣmī-kara-pīḍanāya*). We may get the impression that Mahimāsāhi, Hammīra's new beloved devotee, has not killed *his* charming wife, but

The point worth emphasizing here is that Hammīra finally understands his former delusion. He is shocked into losing it. Upon 'waking', Hammīra realizes that Mahimāsāhi is not 'the other' anymore. He is more like him. In fact, Mahimāsāhi can be said to emerge, somewhat ironically, as Hammīra's superior mirror-image. He becomes the true exemplar of warriorhood:

> Restored to consciousness by the sprinkling tears of his relatives, Vīrama and the others, he clasped Mahimāsāhi's neck, and wailed: "Oh! You are the support of the Kamboja clan! Oh! You are the abode of the clan of fame! Oh! Your benevolence is achieved by no one else! Oh! Your valor is the most virtuous! Oh! You are the dwelling of the true *kṣatriya* vow! Oh! You have the love from all the people of the world. Even if I give up my life, how will I even be without debt to you? No one indeed is lower than me, and no one else (*para*) is higher than you. I had such a dull mind (*manda-dhīs*) for not knowing that there was such affection in you.[105]

It is important to not take this praise too seriously, or as representing the author's vision.[106] There's again a deep irony surrounding the affection between Hammīra and Mahimāsāhi. Perhaps the inflated tone already betrays its hollowness. To the reader, some of the epithets seem out of place, like Mahimāsāhi's unequaled "benevolence" (*saujanjya*) or his "loving affection" (*vatsala*) for or from the whole world, a word that typically connotes love for family. The framing of the whole episode – Mahimāsāhi's violent anger and its concomitant delusional stupor – make it hard to believe for the reader that this was an act of kindness and love. The *Mahābhārata* imagery, with "the heads of the children and wives floating in a sea of blood", doesn't create an atmosphere of loving affection. Perhaps the poet betrays his critical stance towards these words of praise by saying that Hammīra "wailed" (*vyalapad*, 13.162). His words are *vilapana*,

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the playful and shining Royal Fortune herself, the all-important symbolic wife to the king. Or perhaps rather, Hammīra's delusion led Mahimāsāhi to kill her. I return to this point.

[105] bandhūnāṃ vīramâdīnāṃ vimūrccho 'thâśru-secanaiḥ |
lagitvā mahimāsāheḥ kaṇṭhe vyalapad ity asau ||13.162||
hā kamboja-kulâdhāra hā kīrti-kula-mandira |
hânanya-janya-saujanya hā dhanyatama-vikrama ||13.163||
hā kṣatrâika-vratâgāra hā viśva-jana-vatsala |
kathaṃ-kāraṃ bhaviṣyāmi prāṇado 'py anṛṇas tava ||13.164||
matto nâivâdhamah ko 'pi tvatto nâivôttamaḥ paraḥ |
a-dhyāyaṃ manda-dhīs tādṛg īdṛg premṇy api yat tvayi ||13.165||

[106] As for example when Jalaluddin 'praised' Vīranārāyaṇa's bravery (*śaurya*) while actually deceiving him, see chapter two, section 2.4. More generally the notion of praise or nobility tends to become hollow throughout HMK. It is worth comparing this with Adrian Poole's remarks about the opaqueness of praise in Western tragedies (2005: 54), where heroes too tend to praise themselves and others as "the noblest". He observes that the reader is left to wonder what this actually means, noting that in tragedies, "[w]ords of praise and blame that we normally take for granted become opaque, difficult, even unintelligible."

lamentations, uttered in grief after just regaining consciousness (*vi-mūrccho*), and which might have the connotation of idle talk, prattle, shortsightedness. Lamentations had this connotation before in the poem (at the end of canto eighth), and will have this later too, with the death of Hammīra, as we will see in the next chapter (section 5.6).

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To make sense of the tragic events, Hammīra evokes the topic of 'fate'. But we are invited to think – together with Hammīra – who or what is really responsible for the massacre in Mahimāsāhi's courtyard, and whether it was really necessary. Hammīra's words of praise quickly transform into a reflection on his own responsibility and the problem of fate. Indeed, the bloody massacre in Mahimāsāhi's house not only shocks the reader, but also brings Hammīra the long-awaited 'insight':

> Ah! If this ignorance (*dur-matiḥ*) of mine is engendered by the adversity of fate (*vidhi*), then why did you do that? Or what does it matter, for indeed the future is not otherwise! A man employs his mind in different ways to do good for himself (*ātma-hitaṃ*). But she (the mind) never departs from what will happen in the future, like a virtuous woman (*satī*) does not abandon her husband. On the one hand, man considers what he desires, on the other hand, the course of one's objectives is truly determined by fate (*daivād*).[108]

For the first time Hammīra realizes that his ignorance (*manda-dhīs, dur-mati*) has caused something he didn't intend, a bloody massacre. Although he first praises Mahimāsāhi's 'heroic act', he feels responsible for what ultimately remains a horrifying scene. As always, there is confusion. Hammīra's mind is clearly troubled between two positions in that age-old debate about free-will (or its illusion). How does his ignorance relate to Mahimāsāhi's horrifying act? If *his* error of judgment is caused by the adverse working of fate (*prātikūlyād vidher,* 13.166), Hammīra wonders, "then why did *you* do that?". Why does Hammīra's delusion – caused by the Creator's capriciousness – need to have such a fatal effect on Mahimāsāhi's family? (We have to keep in mind that traditionally the legend

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[107] Poole: 2005: 54.

[108] prātikūlyād vidher jātā mamêyaṃ yadi durmatiḥ |
āś cakrithâitat tat kiṃ tvaṃ yadvā bhāvyaṃ hi nânyathā ||13.166||
pumān ātma-hitaṃ kartuṃ dhiyaṃ dhyāyaty anekadhā |
sā satîva patiṃ kvâpi bhavitavyaṃ jahāti na ||13.167||
anyathâiva vicāryante puruṣeṇa manorathāḥ |
daivād āhita-sad-bhāvā kāryāṇām anyathā gatiḥ ||13.168||

revolves around Hammīra's promise to protect the Mongol warriors and their family). However, the question may not matter. Hammīra proceeds to say, because "from another perspective indeed the future is not otherwise" (*yadvā hi bhāvyam nânyathā*), it cannot be altered. For a tragic hero like Hammīra indeed, the future is fixed, and real human agency is an illusion. In Hammīra's vision, the notion of "fate" is understood as a deterministic force, outweighing the power or will of his mind, his good intentions, the things that are desired by man (*puruṣeṇa manorathā,* 13.168). Ignorant or not, one's mind is fated, it aligns with the future (*bhavitavyam*), like a virtuous woman (*satī*) doesn't leave her husband (*patim*), but follows him even in death, on his funeral pyre. One's course or destiny (*gati*) is *truly* disposed by "fate" (*daivād āhita-sad-bhāvā*).

This is the second time that the word *daiva* is used to explain the fated nature of life, instead of the more impersonal notion of the 'Creator' god (*vidhi, dhātṛ, kartṛ,* etc.) Earlier I suggested that *daiva* had the connotation of 'chance', when Hammīra refused to kill the traitor Ratipāla, against the warnings of his brother, explaining that if 'by chance' (*daivataḥ*) the fort would fall the people might blame him for such thoughtless action. Here, this complex notion might have the connotation of 'personal fate', which is often referred to as *daiva* – what relates to the gods, *deva.* We have reached the moment where Hammīra's actions have come to its fruition, the whole karmic process. But who is responsible for its outcome? A tragic story like that of Hammīra is deeply concerned with the issue of whether, to which extent and how one actively makes or passively suffers one's fate. And, not unimportantly, whether one *deserves* his or her fate. Let me again highlight the passage from *Hitopadeśa* quoted in the beginning of this chapter (translation of Judit Törzsök):

> Fortune (Lakṣmī) gravitates towards eminent men who work hard;
> Only cowards say it depends on fate (*daiva*).
> Forget about fate and be a man – use your strength! (*ātma-śaktyā*)
> Then, if you don't succeed in spite of your efforts, what is there to blame? [109]

We can see this as the more explicit rendering of a troubling question that is now at the heart of the tragic climax of Nayacandra's poem. Who - or what - is to blame? Let's recall that Hammīra's actions (and non-actions) were motivated by his desire to prevent future ridicule (*viḍambana,* when deciding to send Mahimāsāhi away, 13.142). He doesn't want to be remembered as an ignorant man (*durmati,* when refusing to kill Ratipāla, 13.101). Now that he does recognize his ignorance, he confers blame on the capricious nature of an impersonal 'fate' (*vidhi*). However, the principle of *karma* or *daiva* doesn't take away the role of personal agency and responsibility. But this is precisely what Hammīra is trying

[109] *Hitopadeśa,* prologue v. 31, translation by Judit Törzsök in the Clay Sanskrit Library edition (2007: 69).

to do after he regained consciousness from his shock. He is trying to remove personal blame for the massacre he just witnessed. According to Hammīra, we are not in control of *daiva,* because the future is fixed. This passive perspective on the working of time and fortune is typically raised to justify non-action or idleness, as texts like *Hitopadeśa* make explicit.[110] HMK also confronts this reasoning, in its own, more subtle way.

4.8 Beheading the fool

With Hammīra's acknowledgment of Mahimāsāhi's superiority, the role of the refugee Mongols comes somewhat shockingly to an end. Mahimāsāhi's otherness (*paratvam*) has assimilated into Hammīra. It is, however, the start of another, final process of assimilation. Immediately after Hammīra blames the capricious nature of fate, Hammīra gets shocked by another discovery:

> When he returned, and saw that the granary contained an immense amount of food, the king asked Jāhaḍa: "Why is this?" When he explained his thoughts (*ātma-buddhau*) the king proclaimed: "Let a lightning strike your mind (*tvan-matau*), which caused the destruction of our clan." Then, he, who knew what is right, gave the doorway of freedom to the citizens. And with his learned mind (*śiṣta-matir*) he ordered his beloved women to enter the fire. [111]

It would seem that Hammīra saved his name. He found a scapegoat in Jāhaḍa, whose erroneous mind he holds responsible for the destruction of his clan (*kula-kṣaya*). Recall, however, that Jāhaḍa wanted Hammīra to sue for peace. Hammīra appears to shift his reasoning about the explanation of the fated events. It is not about his own ignorance or stupidity anymore, caused by the adverse workings of fate, but about the ignorance of

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[110] Thus, *Hitopadeśa,* prologue v. 29-30, ibid.
"What is not to happen will never happen,
and what has to happen will not be otherwise.
Why don't you use this as an antidote against the poison of worry?"
Some people, unable to act, say such words to justify their idleness. However,
"One should not give up one's efforts, even when acknowledging the role of fate; without effort,
one cannot obtain oil from sesame seed."

[111] vinivṛttas tato 'mānam annam ālokya koṣṭha-gam |
kim etad iti papraccha jāhaḍaṃ jagatīpati ||13.169||
uktāyām atha tenâtma-buddhau provāca pārthivaḥ |
tvan-matau patatād vajraṃ yayā jajñe kula-kṣayaḥ ||13.170||
tataḥ pradāya paurāṇāṃ mukti-dvāraṃ sa yuktivit |
praveṣṭuṃ jvalane śiṣṭa-matir ādiṣṭavān priyāḥ ||13.171||

Jāhaḍa. After this transfer of blame Hammīra appears, once again, to emerge as an ideal. He is described in positive terms as someone who "knows what is fit" (*yukti*-vit) when giving free passage to the citizens. And he is described as well-educated' (*śiṣṭa-matir*) when ordering his own family to enter the fire (13.171). The ideal is restored. Hammīra thus seems to fulfil his tragic fate by escaping personal responsibility. Without Jāhaḍa's error, so it seems, his clan would have survived. But why is that?

There is, as always, a problem with Hammīra's reasoning. His two shocking discoveries – first about the massacre in Mahimāsāhi's courtyard and immediately after about Jāhaḍa's lie – create a problem, pertaining to the recurrent issue about 'the cause' of destruction (*vināśa-hetu*). Michael Bednar also noticed the problem posed by Hammīra's second discovery, remarking that it "leads to the question of why Hammīra did not simply wait out the siege instead of resorting to *jauhar* and death on the battlefield. Nayacandra Sūri did not address this point."[112] Bednar is right that Nayacandra doesn't explicitly address this point. But we are clearly invited to explore this troubling question. The problem with most earlier readings of HMK is that they tend to evaluate the tragic plot from Hammīra's perspective, for example, by casting Jāhaḍa, in Bednar's words, "as the individual Hammīra (or Nayacandra Sūri) ultimately blamed for the fall of Ranthambhor" and by reading the whole episode as a glorification of warriorhood.[113] Both the topic of glorification and the issue of blame, are much more complex. I want to suggest that it is precisely Hammīra's stubborn adherence to his heroic vow that explains why the siege cannot go on as earlier. Moreover, Hammīra's emphasis on Jāhaḍa's ignorance brings us back to the tragedy of his own self-acknowledged ignorance. The poem doesn't make this return explicit, although it can certainly be felt.

I want to propose that the real tragic load of Hammīra's second discovery lies in the fact that Mahimāsāhi's 'heroic act' of slaying his family may have been *unnecessary*, in retrospect. Hammīra too might have realized that there's no danger anymore of a famine in the fort. The Chauhan camp thus still has the advantage over the enemy troops surrounding the fort. Hammīra's discovery of the abundance of food in the fort brings us back to the moment before the Chauhan's king moment of despair, before his sleepless night in which he decided to send the Mongols away. We are in fact back at the beginning of the twelfth canto, where Hammīra boasts about the abundance of food in the fort (12.4), showing that Alauddin doesn't stand a chance. The tragic problem now is that his refugee Mahimāsāhi, whom he had earlier vowed to protect, has slaughtered his family to prove his dedication to the warrior vow. By slaying his wife and children Mahimāsāhi – a 'foreigner' - showed that he too is ready to fight till death *in the face of certain defeat*. With Hammīra's discovery of the immense amount of food in the fort, he may know that defeat

[112] Bednar 2007: 205.

[113] Ibid. 207.

is not certain anymore. The siege could go on, with Hammīra in the advantaged position. Alauddin only feigned his encampment hadn't suffered from the war. He may eventually give up, or offer new conditions for a truce. But then Mahimāsāhi's heroic act - the massacre of his family - would have been for nothing, meaningless. And this includes Hammīra's dramatic lamentations and praise for his new devotee. Moreover, Hammīra had proclaimed that he could never be free from Mahimāsāhi's debt. Hammīra owes Mahimāsāhi his life, and that of his family. In Mahimāsāhi he has met his superior, and now he has to go over to the final battle and sacrifice his own family.

Therefore, the troubling, and perhaps unsolvable puzzle of the whole episode can be said to revolve around this question: who or what is responsible for the *unnecessary* massacre of Mahimāsāhi's family? There can be multiple answers. Is it because of the adverse workings of fate (*prātikūlyād vidher*, 13.166) which made Hammīra ignorant (*durmatiḥ*) about the de facto sameness between him and the Mongol 'others'? This is Hammīra's first conclusion. Or is it Jāhaḍa's 'mind' (*mati, buddhi*, 13.170), the fool who lied about the real amount of food, erroneously thinking Hammīra would sue for peace if it would be empty? This is Hammīra's final conclusion. From Hammīra's perspective the false prospect of a famine, namely Jāhaḍa's lie, led to the following chain: his despair and sleepless night in which he resolved to send away the loyal Mongols, and the subsequent bloody massacre of Mahimāsāhi's family. Jāhaḍa's thoughts thus *indirectly* caused the unnecessary slaughter. Or does Hammīra's own erroneous mind ultimately remain responsible for this outcome? It is after all his own thoughts about the supposedly 'inevitable' betrayal of the Mongols, that *directly* lead to the bloody massacre? Hammīra's delusion, moreover, also allowed the traitor Ratipāla to carry out his plans, thus leading to the scene right before his despair. In other words, without Hammīra's ignorance, this massacre wouldn't have happened in the first place. Perhaps the warrior-code itself can be held responsible for the destruction of Hammīra's clan. It leads proud warriors like Mahimāsāhi and himself to perform reckless and horrifying acts to prove their loyalty to the hero's vow (*vīra-vrata*).

In short, multiple, conflicting perspectives come into play if we want to answer the recurrent question driving the whole poem: *what is the cause* behind the Chauhan clan's destruction (*vināśa-hetu*)? The character of Jāhaḍa adds to the overall complexity of the tragic chain. It gives insight into the human process of scapegoating, the ways kings (or humans in general) try to escape blame. It may only be on the surface that the sudden intervention of Jāhaḍa saves Hammīra's name. It powerfully drives home the general wisdom (*arthântara-nyāsa*) of the penultimate verse from the first canto: "everyone sees the fault in another, but not in himself" (*sarvaḥ ko 'pi parasya paśyati jano doṣaṃ na ca svasya tam,* 1.103). From the reader's perspective the problem of Hammīra's delusion (*moha)* still carries the tragic load. This explains why the *suprabhātam* intervened right before the Chauhan king approached Mahimāsāhi to confront him with his otherness. Moreover, the whole episode indeed revolves around confusion, stupefaction, the problem of tragic

short-sightedness. A confused Hammīra first links his own ignorance (*dur-matiḥ*) to the unpredictable, adverse workings of fate, and just an instant later, without further thought, he holds Jāhaḍa's stupidity responsible for the destruction of the clan. In both cases, the poem shows how Hammīra tries to avoid personal responsibility. He doesn't see – or doesn't want to see - his own flaws, his own culpability in the tragic chain leading to the complete destruction of his clan. The tragic events preceding Jāhaḍa's lie remain invisible to him. He remains tragically unaware of his role in the entire tragic process leading to the shocking, but crucial discovery of his likeness and inferiority to the Mongol other.

Finally, there is something about Jāhaḍa that may also make him a mirror image of the king himself. Jāhaḍa's lie can be understood as an unpredictable twist of fate. He was introduced as a fool who even though doing something good (*hita*) effects the opposite (*ahita*). Jāhaḍa's role in the narrative appears to show how the tragic hero attributes his misfortune *mostly* to the unpredictable and unfortunate twists of fate. This, however, is the short-sighted perspective of the sleepy. Alauddin, by contrast, has a different attitude when responding to forces of unpredictability. Struck by the emergence of time as the destructive monsoon rains, he doesn't despair, but resorts to deceitful trickery. With the discovery of Jāhaḍa's lie, for Hammīra too, in fact, a new opportunity for action opens up to prevent the destruction of his clan. But instead of taking the 'chance', Hammīra decides to adhere to his heroic vow – or rather is stuck to it - and confers all the blame on Jāhaḍa.

Hammīra's delusion and that of Jāhaḍa are deliberately juxtaposed. Hammīra's erroneous speech struck Mahimāsāhi's heart like lightning (*vajreṇêva hato hṛdi,* 13.152), leading to the bloody massacre. And shortly after, when discovering why Jāhaḍa lied to him, he says that a lightning should struck (*patatād vajraṃ*, 13.170) Jāhaḍa's mind, leading to Hammīra's decision to also 'kill' his family. But HMK is mostly not a story about how the shift from fortune to misfortune is caused by the unpredictable striking of fate. It shows rather how Fortune wanes and swings, mostly through the behavior of the players, a lack of insight, erroneous views about what is the right thing to do, how they respond to conditions of predictability and unpredictability. Why would the playful and charming goddess of Fortune abandon a king who is wise, and acts with right discernment (*viveka*) (8.75)? This might be the all-important thematic question, posed in the eighth canto, which Hammīra appears to have forgotten.

Ultimately, it is Hammīra's mental sleepiness, his unplayful non-action - resulting from his persistent misperception about friends and foe, his 'whatever will be will be' view on time and his fear for future blame - that culminates in the tragic scene where Mahimāsāhi shockingly disproves Hammīra's delusional ideas by slaying his wives and children. Hammīra's non-action toward the blind Dharmasiṃha and the traitor Ratipāla – at least after their obvious betrayal -, stands in sharp contrast with his more active attitude toward the 'traitor' Jāhaḍa. Treating him like a true scapegoat, Hammīra decides to kill him before rushing into his own dead. But first the king finally falls asleep

(*nidrayâdṛtaḥ,* 13.191); or literally he is "worshipped" or "taken care of" (*ādṛta*) by Sleep (*nidrayā*). This is Sleep's first and final visit. Can Hammīra finally sleep off his exhaustion? Hammīra has a dream, in which the lotus pond tells him to throw the kingdom's riches in her waters, so that the *mlecchas* 'the barbarians' won't gain anything (13.192). When Hammīra wakes up he orders Jāhaḍa to throw everything in the lake. Or rather, this happens *"at the command of the sleepless king"* (*nir-nidra-bhūpālādeśāt*, 13.194). Then he orders his brother Vīrama to behead Jāhaḍa, whose head is said to roll on the earth like a pumpkin (13.195). But what does it mean that Hammīra acts out his last royal commands as a someone who is *nir-nidra,* "without sleep": is he awake or sleepless?

It may remind us of Hammīra's paradoxical sleepy sleeplessness: his fatal state of being sleepy while being awake, like the imagery of the shaking flames or lotus pond, (vainly) fighting their drowsiness after staying up the whole night. Like all the other 'fictional' characters, Jāhaḍa's role seems meant to reveal another aspect of Hammīra's tragic character. Hammīra, in fact, may not be unlike Jāhaḍa. Both can exemplify the earlier maxim (*udāharaṇam*) about Jāhaḍa,

> Even if he does the right thing (*hita*), when a fool acts boldly (*pragalbhate*), it leads to the opposite (*ahita*) alone. Does this maxim not clearly watch over Jāhaḍa?[114]

It may also illustrate Nayacandra's characterization of Hammīra. Jāhaḍa's rolling head, beheaded at the command of the sleepless king, marks the end of a long tragic process, during which Hammīra unknowingly but consistently inflicted harm with his reckless behavior.[115] His beheading of Jāhaḍa – perhaps a playful distortion of *jāḍya* "stupidity" as I proposed - can be said to symbolically inaugurate the start of the final battle, ending with Hammīra's self-decapitation in the final verse of the thirteenth canto (13.226) *and* eventually with the king's own rolling head in the final verse of the concluding 'lamentation' (14.21). We learn how his head is brought to Alauddin by Hammīra's former favorite general Ratipāla, "Protector of (sexual) Pleasure", who shows it with the sole of his foot (*pāda-talena*). This final verse tells us that the Śaka king 'drove away' Ratipāla's wickedness (*khalaṃ*),[116] "which was the right thing to do, (because) otherwise, how many

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[114] kurvann api hitaṃ mūrkho 'hitāyâiva pragalbhate |
atrôdāharaṇam vyaktaṃ kiṃ na paśyata jāhaḍam ||13.138||

[115] Worthy of note is how before his kingship actualized, in verse 119 of canto eight, Hammīra had once accused cruel Fate (*vidhi*) for his "boldness" (*prāgalbhyam*) in killing his father Jaitrasiṃha, which he presented as the cruel cause of his destruction (*vināśa-hetoḥ*).

[116] I took *yat khala(ṃ) ratipāla te śakapatir niṣkāsayām asivān* ("Oh Ratipāla, when the Śaka king drove away your wickedness") from the older Koṭa mss. instead of *khallaṃ te Ratipāla yac....* The verse is a bit ambiguous, and syntactically complex, as many of the other preceding verses, which I discuss in the next chapter, in section 5.6. The word *khala* or *khalla* is meant to refer to the threshing-floor (or even a leather

will not betray their lord, like you?"(*tad yuktaṃ tvam ivânyathā kati punar druhyanti na svāmine*, 14.21) The last verse not only condemns Ratipāla's betrayal or wickedness, but also reminds us of the earlier phase in Hammīra's tragedy, when he replaced the (initially) loyal Bhojadeva by the traitor Ratipāla, and later refused to kill him, even though his brother told him that his treason was certain (*niścitaṃ saṃgato,* 13.93). It appears that contrary to the sleepless Hammīra, the wakeful Śaka king did manage to do what was right.

4.9 Conclusion: uncertainty, paradox, and transformation

Tragedy or eulogy? Praise or blame? Do the heroes actively make or passively suffer their fates? Who is the real villain, and who *really* deserves admiration and emulation? In Nayacandra's poem, this is all a matter of perspective, depending on where or on which aspect we want to let our eyes rest. Throughout Nayacandra's great poem of Hammīra, opposite perspectives are repeatedly made to clash. Distinctions between good and bad, truth and falsehood, reality and illusion, etc. – the opposites connoted by the compound *sad-asat* – get mixed up and tend to blur.

Nevertheless, we are clearly invited to make distinctions, and activate our sense of discrimination (*viveka*), just like the characters are urged to do. We are cast as judges, who, again like the characters themselves, must try to make up our minds about who or what is to be blamed for the destruction of the Chauhan dynasty. Ultimately, there may be no clear or final resolution to the many tensions that build up throughout the poem. Like Hammīra we *could* arrive at the conclusion that it is the fool Jāhaḍa who caused the destruction of his dynasty. We could side with his perspective and praise the Mongol warrior Mahimāsāhi who epitomizes the quality of loyalty (*svāmi-bhakti*) and proved his adherence to the vow of true 'undisguised' heroism (*nirvyāja-vīra-vratam*) by 'heroically' slaying his family. But we can also focus on earlier perspectives, like those of Bhojadeva, who blames Hammīra for his madness, casting him as an insane king who considers worthless his loyal subjects, and later 'awakens' his new lord Alauddin. And how to judge the crucial, seminal scene about the public humiliation of Dharmasiṃha, "Lion Dharma", whom Hammīra unjustly accused of blindness and impotence, and then had his testicles and eyes removed. How does this effect our evaluation of Hammīra's tragedy? Did he

bag or case), where grains (or drugs) are crushed. The idea may also be that the Śaka not only drove away (*niṣkāsayām āsivān*) the "wickedness" of Ratipāla, but drove him to the threshing floor to have him crushed. Dasharatha Sharma reads *khallam* as "skin", stating that Ratipāla "was flayed alive" (1959: 114).

really respond or fulfill his fate as brave or courageous man (*sattva*)? What is the relation between Hammīra's ignorance or delusions and his 'tragic flaws'? Was the tragic outcome really inevitable?

It can be useful to recall the important fact that Nayacandra introduced the theme of his poem by formulating a somewhat ambiguous question about Hammīra's relation to Royal Fortune. Did Hammīra, the 'so said' (*kila*) epitome of goodness (*sattva*) consider his life and even (*api*) the playful charms (*vilāsa*) of Royal Fortune worthless, not even the worth of a straw?

Although HMK provides no explicit answers, I want to suggest that the poem constantly invites the reader to answer this question in the negative, by playing a complex game with multiple sides of the 'truth'. Through the words of Bhoja, we learned that Hammīra considers those who are devoted to his service worthless (*sevā-hevākino*), not even the worth of straws (*na tṛṇāny api manyate,* 9.182). It is worth asking whether Bhoja's perceptive remark is intended as a deliberate echo of the poem's guiding question about Hammīra's relation to Royal Fortune. Later in the poem Bhoja's observation about Hammīra's attitude thus gets reinforced by the words of his disloyal replacer Ratipāla, who manages to trick one of Hammīra's generals into committing treason. He does this by telling him that Hammīra, "the enemy of those who are devoted to his service" (*sevā-hevākināṃ śatrur* 13.131) will come to arrest him. Ratipāla assures him he is speaking the truth (*satyam,* 13.133). Although Ratipāla is de facto lying, it does remind the reader of the painful truth of the ninth canto: Hammīra's fatal tendency to mistake his loyal devotees for enemies, and vice versa. Throughout the poem Hammīra is somehow truly presented as the enemy of those who are loyal to him.

The ninth canto – the opening canto about Hammīra's rule - clearly depicts a hero who considers Royal Fortune worthless, not in the wise sense that he understands the transient or fickle nature of power, but in a more negative sense, that he doesn't know how to rule. Through the words of Bhojadeva we learned that Hammīra – like all kings who become deluded by madness when they obtain an immeasurable kingdom – is unable to care for even a single person in his realm (*ekānta-vatsalāḥ, 9.183*). Hammīra indeed constantly shifts his affection for his subjects. Driven by anger and ignorance he mutilates Dharmasiṃha and replaces him by Bhoja. Then, driven by greed he reinstalls the revengeful Dharmasiṃha, and drives his loyal brother Bhoja away from the court. Although we repeatedly learn about Hammīra's legendary unshakable 'firmness' – at least in the panegyric mode, or through his own words or thoughts - it is a king like him who embodies the fickle, unstable, nature of power.

Yet, it may be important to not just adopt Bhoja's perspective on the events, or settle for one definite answer to the poem's driving and ambiguous question of 1.9 pertaining to Hammīra's relationship to the 'playful charms' (*vilāsa*) of Royal Fortune. I want to suggest that Nayacandra's epic invites us to explore and appreciate principles of uncertainty, worlds in movement and paradox, which are central to the notion of play

and the practice of reading literature itself.[117] It can be instructive to refer to Don Handelman's theory of play here, as "a declaration of conditions of uncertainty".[118] In discussing the intimate relation between play and paradox he makes an interesting point about what he calls "the lesson of true paradox":[119]

> so long as one holds to its internal logic of operation, one cannot solve or escape its ongoing self-contradictions and self-negations that continually resurrect their antitheses. True to itself, the paradox is in perpetual motion, in a sort of fluidity and flux that know no resolution or stability, except that of movement.[120]

One way to do justice to the 'restless' movement within the poem, Nayacandra's 'poetic game of restlessness' (*cāpala-keli*), and thus prevent our eyes from resting on one side of seemingly opposing spectrums – like blame/fame, tragedy/eulogy - is to look at Nayacandra's poetic game through the lens or language of paradox. Perhaps only in paradox seemingly contradictory viewpoints can co-exist, but not without tension.

Throughout this chapter I have tried to give insight into the poem's persistent concern with evoking paradoxical imagery. This also corresponds with Satya Vrat analysis of Nayacandra's striking preference for *śleṣa* based paradoxes (*virodha*), which "are used so extensively in the poem that it may well be rated as its chief *alaṅkāra*".[121] I want to take this further to suggest that this preference extends to Nayacandra's fondness of deeply ambiguous imagery. A mood of 'paradox' also aligns with the constant interplay of opposing perspectives and narrative modes. I have been arguing that in their constant interaction one perspective or mode effects the other. I have suggested that we can see this as a game of balance, which aligns more generally with the constant tension between the eulogistic format of the poem and the deeply tragic story about far from ideal protagonists. To counterbalance the predominantly 'eulogistic readings' of the poem as political panegyric, I have been arguing that one side occasionally outweighs the other, especially making a case for how 'unheroic' critical perspectives hollow out the idealist

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[117] As for example powerfully stressed by Jonathan Culler (2011[1991]: 28), stating that "many of the features of literature follow from the willingness of readers to pay attention, to explore uncertainties, and not immediately ask 'what do you mean by that?'"

[118] Handelman (1998: 68), defining uncertainty as "the recognition that cosmos (or whatever entity is under discussion) exists as much through the deep flux of unpredictability, as it does through determination. Therefore, that this is another mode of thinking and talking about change, rather than rest, in the world" (p. 68). We could note that without such conditions of uncertainty, when things tilt over to one side, both life, games and literature, would become boring, unexciting (when overly predictable), or meaningless (when a logic of randomness predominates such entities).

[119] Handelman 1998: 69.

[120] ibid.

[121] Vrat 2003: 175.

mode. All the recurrent ambiguities, images of decay, symbolic characters, dissonant intertextual models, tragic ironies, etc. reveal that the eulogistic format may be just a shallow, illusory surface layer. They seem to reveal that the last phase in the Chauhan's legendary past may not be more than, to use an apt Dutch expression, *schone schijn*, a "beautiful shine, or *appearance*". Nayacandra subtly and repeatedly reveals the human tendency 'to keep up appearances.' But the deeply tragic story line, with its many unexpected twists and shocks, tends to shake off the shining veil of the poem.

Ultimately, however, it never slips off entirely. In the final three sections of this chapter I have tried to emphasize that the heavier tragic side never irreversibly tilts over to completely overthrow the eulogistic format in which Hammīra may still emerge, more or less, as a heroic, admirable figure. (Although perhaps not of the kind that is meant to stimulate emulation.)[122] This would make an end to the game of balance Nayacandra seems to be playing (with the reader). It would spoil the fun. It would break the charm of the many ambiguities, ambivalences and ironies with which our poet treats his subject. This includes the way the poem makes the reader break his head over the troubling question about the cause of destruction (*vināśa-hetu).* This major theme or question is related to other troubling questions about culpability and blame. I have tried to show how the answers to such questions are presented as a conundrum, a paradoxical puzzle, which may have no final resolution. The recurrent theme of sleepiness is almost exclusively explored through paradoxical imagery, allowing Nayacandra to avoid explicit criticism. After all, making critique overtly explicit or dominant would spoil the effect of HMK's 'tilting game'.[123] The poem skillfully manages to maintain some balance - or the semblance of balance -between registers of praise and blame. In HMK triumphalist and tragic modes are purposefully made to co-exist in a tense, tenuous, and deeply paradoxical relation.

The multi-directional movement inherent to paradox and play doesn't mean that the intricate plot doesn't invite the reader to pinpoint the major reason, and judge who or what is really to blame – as I tried to do, actively participating in the reading process. But to settle for a definite answer may end the poetic game itself. While playing his "game of unsteadiness" (*cāpala-keli,* 14.43), Nayacandra can be said to flirt with the complex, many-sided flux of reality and truth (*satya*, *tattva*). The poem, of course, doesn't just 'tell' the truth. We are meant to experience something of the shaky nature of reality. In addition, the many twists in the poem are clearly meant to strike both the readers and characters

[122] I return to this point in the conclusion to this dissertation.

[123] I adopted the term "tilting-game" – and adapted it for my own purposes - from Wolfang Iser's theory of literature as a unique kind of game (in his *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology,* 1993: 250f) which escapes traditional classifications of games, as explored in Roger Caillois's *Man, Play, and Games* (1958), itself an engagement and modification of Johan Huizinga's seminal work on play (*Homo Ludens,* 1938), a major inspiration for my own thinking on play.

in the poem.[124] Perhaps all this is meant to effect a change of mind, and give insights, for example, into the relationship between self and 'other'. It is worth wondering whether all the recurrent imagery of shaking, striking and merging with 'others', is also meant to resonate with the idea, expressed in Nayacandra's play *Rambhāmañjarī,* that poetry is only of use when it strikes the other's (*parasya*) heart and makes one's head shake (or nod in approval), just like an arrow is supposed to hit the heart of the 'enemy other' (*parasya*) and make his head tremble.[125] I have tried to highlight the many suggested assimilations, through which Hammīra appears to become the blinded and castrated Dharmasiṃha 'Lion Dharma', the traitor Ratipāla 'Protector of Pleasure', the Mongol 'other', and eventually the unfortunate fool Jāhaḍa whom the 'sleepless king' sentenced to die.

Whatever the case, the poem remains in constant movement, immersing the reader in a whirling flux of opposite perspectives and narrative modes. Perhaps we are supposed to experience *vibhrama*, the multivalent last word of the poem, expressing the rapture, confusion and beauty of a playful and deceiving back-and-forth motion.[126] We may wonder how Nayacandra's poem was received, when it was first presented at the Tomar court, in the hillfort of Gwalior, in the early fifteenth-century when Hammīra was one of the most celebrated heroes of Northern India. In the final chapter I explore Nayacandra's great poem of Hammīra from a more contextualized angle. Ultimately, all the evoked uncertainties and paradoxes – the tragic questions about responsibility and blame, the structuring theme of confusion, the suggested fusions of historical and fictional characters, the recurrent paradoxical imagery, etc. - may be subversive in effect.

[124] Cf. also with Edwin Gerow's plea (1977: 224) for regarding Indian poetry as aesthetic rather than rhetoric, for it seeks to tell truth by "striking" the reader rather than "convincing" him.

[125] I quoted this verse as the opening to the introduction of this dissertation.

[126] See my discussion of the last verse in the conclusion to this dissertation. The word is difficult to translate in one word. Daniel H.H. Ingalls ("Words for Beauty in Classical Sanskrit poetry, 1962: 104), discussing *vibhrama* as one of the many Sanskrit words to denote beauty, notes how it is often glossed with *vilāsa* (playful gestures). He describes the word as meaning "a swift, graceful motion, usually coquettish, that tricks or intrigues the eye of the beholder." It also includes the idea of being deceived, of confusion and error. Ingalls writes about the distinction in Sanskrit poetry between beauty in motion and beauty in rest, with words for play like *līlā, vilāsa,* and *vibhrama,* clearly belonging to the former category (p.105-6).

Chapter 5 Patrons and power, poets and play: legitimation, subversion and meta-history in Nayacandra's *new* Hammīra poem

5.1 Gwalior, ca. 1402-1423, a literary challenge at the Tomar court

Texts, of course, take shape in relation to a present, to a context, which tends to leave traces. This chapter not only discusses the significance of such traces for our understanding of HMK and its context, but also tries to show that Nayacandra's historical poem purposefully models and makes felt 'the past *as* present'.[1] The sponsorship of historical poetry is typically associated with the political agendas of those in power – just like now the past is instrumentalized by political elites. However, 'using' the past for purposes of legitimation is clearly just one part of the story of premodern courtly poetry. The poet too, of course, makes his own voice heard.

Nayacandra must have completed and presented his Sanskrit epic, for the first time, at the court of the hillfort of Gwalior, in the early fifteenth century. At the end of his poem Nayacandra speaks about his poem as the result of a literary challenge held at the court of Vīrama Tomar. It was presumably presented *for* Vīrama Tomar, who ruled the Gwalior fort between 1402 and 1423.[2] Nayacandra seems to be purposefully ambiguous about the 'patronizing role' of the Tomar king of Gwalior. Let me quote again that remarkable verse about the poem's context, which I discussed at length in the first chapter. It provides a useful starting point for this chapter, which situates Nayacandra's poetic project within its broader historical, socio-political and literary context.

[1] For this formulation I'm inspired by the title of Romila Thapar's book (2014) titled *The Past as Present: forging contemporary identities through history*.

[2] Dvivedi 1973: 49-50.

"At this time, no one will create a poem
resembling the poetry of the poets of old."
This is what was said by the courtiers
at the assembly of king Vīrama Tomar.
With his mind shaken by a play of rashness
arising from *that*
the poet Nayacandra created
this erotic, heroic and marvelous
new poem of king Hammīra.[3]

At the heart of this verse lies an intertextual allusion to how the seminal 'poet of old' Kālidāsa, in the prologue of his *Raghuvaṃśa* (1.9), describes the rashness (*cāpala*) of his own attempt to describe the great dynasty of the Raghus.[4] Nayacandra's verse, however, can be understood as a playful dig at the rashness of the courtiers of the Tomar king who made the outrageous claim that - at the present time (*adhunā*), the early fifteenth century - no one will compose a Sanskrit poem like the poets of old. But Nayacandra proved them wrong and composed "this new poem of king Hammīra" (*kāvyam idaṃ...navyaṃ...*), in the form, language and style of a prestigious *mahākāvya,* and as a deep intertextual engagement with the poets of old.

Curiously, despite placing his poem in the specific courtly environment of the Tomars, Nayacandra doesn't really praise the ruling king, his dynastic lineage or the impressive Gwalior hillfort. Nor do we find any expression of a concern to link the Tomar king to the heroic subject of the poem or locate him in the history of the Chauhans. In this, Nayacandra goes against the traditional trend in both Chauhan- and non-Chauhan-related court poetry of the time.[5] Other court poets at the Tomar kingdom in Gwalior thus

[3] *kāvyaṃ* pūrva-kaver na *kāvya*-sadṛśaṃ kaścid vidhātâdhunê-
ty ukte tomara-vīrama-kṣitipateḥ sāmājikaiḥ saṃsadi |
tad-bhū-cāpala-keli-dolita-manāḥ śṛṅgāra-vīrâdbhutaṃ
cakre *kāvya*m idaṃ hamīra-nṛpateḥ navyaṃ nayênduḥ kaviḥ ||14. 43||

[4] See my earlier and more elaborate discussion of this verse in the first section of chapter one.

[5] The mid-fifteenth-century vernacular *Kānhaḍade-prabandha* (on the Chauhans of Jalor) and the Sanskrit play *Gaṅgadāsa-pratāpa-vilāsa-nāṭakam* (on the Chauhan king of Champaner, discussed in Kapadia (2014)) are thus clearly composed to praise a Chauhan patron, both linking the heroes of their poem to the Śākhambhari Chauhans Hammīra and Pṛthvīrāja. This also happens in the roughly contemporaneous *Raṇamalla-chanda* where a Rathor hero is explicitly compared to the illustrious Chauhan king, see Vyas (1973: 151). By contrast, the popular old-Rajasthani *Vīsaladevarāsa* (ca. 1450, edition and translation by Smith 1976), on the Chauhan ruler Vighraharāja (Vīsala), clearly pokes fun at this Chauhan king who is repeatedly accused of being foolish (*mūḍha*), similar to the portrayal of Chauhans in HMK. Both texts don't really fit into the tradition of patron-centered eulogies. I will occasionally refer to these texts as a point of contrast and comparison.

unambiguously praise the Tomar rulers as their patrons and link them to the heroic subject of the poem, emphasizing the ancient origins of their dynastic lineage.[6] Nayacandra, by contrast, only *names* the Tomar king Vīrama. He only gets referential status, as the king whose courtiers made an outrageous claim, "from which a play of rashness arose" (*tad-bhū-cāpala-keli*) which shook Nayacandra's mind back and forth (*dolita-manāḥ*). Put differently, a play of rashness shook Nayacandra into making his poem. I have identified this shaking movement, which is inherent to the notion of play and the problem of rashness or royal fickleness (*cāpala*), as an integral part of HMK's thematic (and meta-poetic) concerns. In this chapter I will explore how HMK's concern with 'shaking' may fit into Nayacandra's present historical and literary context.

It remains curious that there is no explicit attempt to please Vīrama Tomar. For example, Nayacandra could have referred to him as a generous patron, or praise his royal or martial qualities, or the luster of his court. Moreover, we can imagine that a warrior-king like Vīrama – who strenuously struggled to consolidate the Tomar's independence claim, as I show below - may have fancied analogy or explicit comparison with a famous hero like Hammīra. This happens for example in the contemporaneous *Raṇamalla-chanda* where the eponymous Rathor hero is explicitly compared to the illustrious Chauhan king, several times. The story of Hammīra can be said to animate this poem as a whole.[7] As I

[6] The roughly contemporaneous author Padmanābha Kāyastha in his Sanskrit *kāvya Yaśodhara-carita* (1420), patronized by Vīrama Tomar's minister Kuśarāja, explicitly praises the Tomar dynasty of Gwalior and its founder Vīrasiṃha, see Dvivedi 1973: 37. Likewise, a generation later, the poet Viṣṇudās, who composed a *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* in the local language of Gwalior, explicitly praises the Tomar king Dūṅgarendra Siṃha as his patron, and links the Tomar dynasty to the lunar origins of the Pāṇḍava dynasty, for which see Heidi Pauwels' recent work on this poem (2020), drawing attention to the explicit identification between he patron and the Pāṇḍava Bhīma. And similarly, the Apabhraṃśa compositions of the digambara Jain poet Raidhu contain eulogistic colophons (*praśasti*), praising the Tomar patrons, see De Clercq 2014: 353-361.

[7] Edited and translated in Vyas 1973. Śrīdhara's Vyāsa's *Raṇamalla-chanda* is a short seventy stanza poem in old Gujarati, praising the martial feats of Raṇamalla, the Rathor lord of hillfort of Idar, who refused to pay tribute to Zafar Khan, the Delhi Sultanate governor to Anhilvada-Patan (in modern Gujarat). See chapter two in Aparana Kapadia's *In Praise of Kings* (2018: 44-75) for a recent discussion of this text, where she points out (p.55) how Raṇamalla appears to "alternate between making trouble and offering his submission to the great power." Like the Tomar chiefs of Gwalior, Raṇamalla's attempt to claim independence can be seen as part of the same larger movement of revolts near the turn to the fifteenth century. Raṇamalla was just one among several local lords who took benefit of the weakened state of the Delhi Sultanate in the wake of Timur's sack of Delhi in 1398. Interestingly, the prologue, composed in Sanskrit, actually introduces the subject by evoking the memory of Hammīra, whose famous struggle is compared with the even greater heroic achievement of Raṇamalla *and* Timur Lang (*timira-liṅga*, "The dark Liṅgam", v.4-5). The poem thus suggests that Raṇamalla surpasses the greatness of Hammīra. The extraordinary feat of actually conquering a Śaka king, and not fall victim to pride (*na dadṛpe*, v.5), is something that was only achieved by Timur, and now also by Raṇamalla. It is nevertheless Hammīra's example – and Raṇamalla's greater excellence- that continues to animate the gist of the poem, when, for

explain later in this chapter, Hammīra indeed came to symbolize the (dubious) ideal of heroic resistance to Sultanate rule, and as such became one of the most famous historical heroes at the time. But for some reason Nayacandra refrained from evoking a direct parallel. Although the names of many other clans turn up throughout HMK, the Tomar clan name is never mentioned, somewhat conspicuously.

Nayacandra's exceptional silence on the Tomar kings – or a patron in general - may reveal the old Jain monk-poet's more distant attitude toward the court.[8] Or it may betray his reluctance to bestow praise on a patron who might not be worth it, or on kings in general.[9] The conspicuous silence on the Tomar name in Nayacandra's poetic version of Chauhan history can come across as a subtle act of critique. But it could also be motivated as praise. Indeed, in Nayacandra's poem it might be a good thing to not be associated with the Chauhans. Whatever the reason, his rather dry reference to king Vīrama Tomar is much in line with the implicit critique that runs throughout HMK, namely that the stubborn pride of kings and their obsession with power, honor and fame is counter to the well-fare of the kingdom and its citizens.

The contemporary reader is left to wonder - at least those who read HMK after it left its original context– whether Nayacandra composed his poem *for* the Tomar king *or to challenge him and his courtiers*. Is the poem 'ordered' by Vīrama Tomar, or by someone from a neighbouring (and rivalling) court, perhaps of a Chauhan lord who sought to 'defeat' the poet-scholars at the recently established Tomar court in a literary challenge? As explained by Narayana Rao in an article on patronage at medieval courts:

> A king was expected to have a number of competent scholars in his court who could dispute with and defeat visiting scholar-poets who come with a desire to conquer them.[10]

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instance, Raṇamalla refuses to pay tribute to Zafar Khan and instead chooses "the flavor of battlefield" (*raṇa-rasa*) and follow the path of king Hammīra (v.31).

[8] It is worth noting that Nayacandra belonged to a sect of śvetāmbara Jains, whereas Gwalior was famous for its thriving community of Digambara Jains, with influential figures and poets like Raidhu (1393-1489), a younger contemporary of Nayacandra, who was also a creative force behind the massive sculptural project to adorn the hill-fort with images of Jinas. See Granoff (2006) for a discussion of Raidhu, in connection to the 'colossal jinas of Gwalior', mentioning how the Jain literature of the time reveals an increased sense of sectarian rivalry between Digambaras and Śvetāmbaras (p. 45). I thank Eva de Clercq for directing my attention to this point.

[9] We indeed see that there was some anxiety among poets to be accused of hypocrisy in their panegyric writing, see for example Shulman' article (1992) on the mutually interdependent, but often asymmetrical relationship between poet and patron, noting the typical critique of royal flattery in poetry about patronage (p. 92). Cf. also similar observations in Granoff's article (1995) on biographical narratives of poets in the Jain *prabandha* literature. Worthy of note is that HMK's author was well familiar with this literature.

[10] Rao 1992: 194.

But of course no Chauhan patron is praised or mentioned either. Whatever the case – Chauhan patron or Tomar patron - we do have the context of a *literary challenge at the court of Vīrama Tomar.* This remains the backdrop of HMK, together with the political challenges of early fifteenth century Tomar Gwalior, which were shared with other newly (re)emerging kingdoms (also of Chauhan kings) and sultanates. Moreover, since the Chauhans and Tomars appear to have formed alliances, as I explain below, it is quite possible that there were high-placed Chauhans present at the Tomar court, who may have claimed descent from Hammīra or his famous lineage of the Śākambharī Chauhans.

Regardless of how we understand the context of patronage, Nayacandra's reluctance to directly bestow glory on his patron – Tomar or Chauhan – is another sign of the consistency of Nayacandra's profoundly ambivalent and ambiguous voice. To bestow unambiguous praise on real, historical characters is clearly not at the heart of Nayacandra's poetic project on Hammīra.

Keeping this ambiguity about the context of Tomar patronage in mind, we can now move on to the precarious political situation of early-fifteenth century Gwalior. It was a turbulent time when Nayacandra visited – or was invited to – the Tomar court, perhaps more 'shaking' than the usual political turmoil during the Delhi Sultanate period, or any period. Somewhere around the turn to the fifteenth century the rebellious Tomar chiefs Vīrasiṃha and Uddharaṇa - former subordinates of the Tughlaq Sultanate – had managed to take power in Gwalior and carved out an independent kingdom, establishing a new, and relatively successful royal dynasty.[11] Like several other local lords, they had taken advantage of the political chaos in the wake of Timur's invasion in 1398 which had given a disruptive blow to the Tughlaq Sultanate. The preceding succession war following the death of Firoz Shah Tughluq (r.1350-1388) had already severely damaged the Tughlaq dynasty's control of power. Timur's destructive sack of Delhi seemed to have opened opportunities for local chiefs – both Hindus and Muslims - to revolt, grasp power and make claims to independence. When Nayacandra turned up at the Gwalior court, it was Vīrama Tomar who ruled the hillfort of Gwalior. He would rule there for two decades, from 1402 to 1423, the year in which he appears to have died in a war with the ruler of

[11] See Pauwels (2020) for an insightful revisiting of the Tomar's power grasp from multiple perspectives - Persian chronicles and texts in Indian languages, like the later Mughal-period *Gopācālākhyāna* ("Chronicle of Gwalior"), challenging earlier readings of these events and the sponsorship of texts like the *Pāṇḍavacarit* of Viṣṇudās as being expressive of a resurgence of Hindu martial identity. She discusses how both the *Pāṇḍavacarita* (with humorous allusions to contemporary politics) and the later Mughal-period *Gopācālākhyāna* ("Chronicle of Gwalior") seem to obliquely criticize the status quo (p.12). This is not unlike what seems to happen in a text like HMK, as I demonstrate in this chapter (of which an earlier, much shorter version appeared in the same issue on Tomar Gwalior in *South Asian History and Culture*, edited by Heidi Pauwels and Eva de Clercq (2020).

Malwa, Hoshang Shah.[12] Like the Tomars, he had rebelled against the Delhi Sultanate and established an independent sultanate in 1401.

The Tomar kingdom in Gwalior was indeed just one among several regional powers that tried to consolidate their claims to independence. The Tomar chiefs Vīrasiṃha and Uddharaṇa had joined forces with other chiefs from different clans, who all sought to carve out independent kingdoms. Some attempts clearly failed. For example, according to Yahya's *Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi* (henceforth TMS, 1434), the Chauhan chief Abhayacandra (Abhaicand) of Chandawar, is said to have been killed during a treacherous scheme, from which only the notorious Sumer Chauhan of Etawa managed to escape.[13] The attention given to this Chauhan hero is noteworthy. He is cast as the leader of the rebellious "infidels", including Vīrama Tomar's two predecessors Vīrasiṃha and Uddharaṇa, and Abhayacandra of Chandawar. In both Yahya's TMS and Muhammad Bihamad Khani's *Tarikh-i-Muhammadi* (henceforth TM, composed 1438) the Chauhan chief Sumer Chauhan emerges as a notorious and stubborn warrior, "the fame of whose boasted bravery and warfare had reached far and near", and who repeatedly refused to pay homage and tribute to the Delhi Sultanate.[14] This is not unlike the lesser known Gwalior king Vīrama Tomar, who is only briefly named as his ally, the rebellious chief of Gwalior 'Bairam' in Bihamad Khani's TM.[15] Yahya's TMS records that Sumer Chauhan of Etawa was finally defeated and killed during a raiding campaign of 1421, in which Gwalior was also sacked. After Sumer's death, his son "made his submission and consented to pay tribute and accept servitude."[16]

Together with the Chauhan's historical presence in the Gwalior region – as evidenced by the many Chauhan inscriptions -, such Tomar-Chauhan connections may have added an extra level of pertinence to the presentation of a Chauhan poem in early Tomar Gwalior.[17] Like the adjacent Chauhans of Etawah – North-East of the Gwalior region - and the Chauhans of Chandawar – South of Gwalior -, Vīrama Tomar must have found himself in a constant intrastate struggle during which he strenuously tried to consolidate the Tomar's claim to independence in continuously shifting alliances. We can already

[12] Dvivedi 1973: 51.

[13] See the description of the events in the translation of Yahya's TMS by Basu 1977: 153-4. Nevertheless, like the Tomars and Etawa Chauhans, the Chauhans of Chandawar later regained independence, as they appear to have remained in power during the fifteenth century, see Sharma 1975: 24-6 on this branch of Chauhans.

[14] This is quoted from Bihamad Khani's TM (Zaki 1972: 65).

[15] Zaki 1972: 84

[16] Basu 1977: 198.

[17] The region surrounding the Gwalior fort had been part of the Chauhan dominion in preceding centuries, as evidenced by inscriptions about the Chauhans, including Hammīra, that are found in territories adjacent to inscriptions of the Tomars, see the numerous Chauhan inscription in Willis (1996).

imagine the pertinence and appeal of Hammīra's story, which had become emblematic of heroic, though unsuccessful resistance against the Sultanate's imperial ambitions. However, this ideal of resistance against a more powerful enemy was also potentially at odds with a less heroic, but pragmatic vision of subservience and alliance politics.[18]

We don't know much about Vīrama Tomar. His resistance seems to have been less memorable than that of his Chauhan contemporary and (former?) ally, the notorious Sumer of Etawah.[19] There is no poem known about him, and both inscriptional records and the later chronicle of Gwalior have little to say about his life. One inscription during Vīrama's reign shows that by 1410 he had made claim to the status of *mahārājādhirāja* "overlord".[20] However, despite this title – a clear challenge to Sultanate authority -, the actual claim to independence must have been far from stable. As mentioned above, in response to the (re-)emergence of independent kingdoms near the turn of the fifteenth century, the Delhi Sultanate often sought to reclaim control over lost regions by sending punitive expeditions. These destructive raids are said to lay waste the entire country. In the rhetoric of the chronicles, such campaigns seem to have repeatedly succeeded in forcing the "infidels" back into submission, pay taxes and "put their heads under the yoke of obedience."[21] Under Vīrama Tomar's rule Gwalior (and thus its population) had to suffer several of such destructive attacks. Yahya's TMS (1434) thus makes mention of four punitive raids on Gwalior between 1402 and 1421.[22] We can thus surmise from Yahya's account that the sovereign of Gwalior repeatedly refused to pay homage and tribute to the Sultanate, explaining the recurrent punitive raids. Important to mention is that this has little to do with religiously inspired violence. As Heidi Pauwels explains, pertaining to the rhetoric of both Persian and Indic language sources:

[18] See for example Talbot (2012) and Busch (2012) on how this tension expresses itself in historical poems composed during the Mughal period.

[19] Earlier Sumer had joined forces with Virama's predecessor Uddharana. Muhammad Bihamad Khani thus speaks about the raids of "Uddharan and Sumer, the arch-leaders of the infidels" (Zaki 1972: 42). This alliance appears to have continued. Bihamad Khani thus makes explicit that "Bairam, the *muqqadam of* Gwalior" helped Sumer in a failed military campaign against Muhammadabad, after which Bairam fled back to Gwalior (Zaki 1972: 84.) Sumer, "an eminent figure of his age", also joined the campaigns of the Sultan of Jaunpur, see Zaki 1972: 66.

[20] Nayacandra's patron Vīrama Tomar thus made claim to this title as seen in an inscription from 1410 (V.S. 1467), inscribed on a pillar of the Ambikādevī temple, see Willis 1996: 28. The Chauhan king Rāmacanda of Chandawar too is presented as rājadhirāja in an inscription from 1449, see Sharma (1975: 25).

[21] Yahya's TMS, in translation of Basu 1977: 191. This rhetoric is very similar to the description of the many rebellions in Bihamad Khani's *Tarikh-i-Muhammadi* (TM, 1438), see p. 42-3, 50-1, 60-67, in the translation of Zaki (1972).

[22] Yahya's TMS (Basu 1977: 192, 198).

> The pattern that emerges, is not one of religious confrontation, but rather one of neighbourly aggression and revolt to feudal overlordship interspersed with costly tactical submission to the central power of the time.[23]

It is during this troublesome period, in which Vīrama strenuously struggled to consolidate the Tomar's fresh claim to independence - and lay claim to the status of "overlord" - that Nayacandra visited the Tomar court and created his *new* poem on Hammīra. Nayacandra must have been in his seventies or eighties. He thus spent most of his life in the fourteenth century, in the political region of North India dominated by the Tughluq dynasty. Our poet, an old but erudite monk at the time, must have been an eye-witness to the political turmoil and many upheavals that accompanied the shift in power balances in the late fourteenth century, leading to the (re-)emergence of new kingdoms and sultanates in the early fifteenth century.[24] The Hammīra legend - a story about a warrior-king's stubborn resistance to Sultanate rule - must have offered a fitting template to reflect on the political situation of the time. Many of its central themes - betrayal, shifting loyalties, rebellious chiefs revolting and seeking shelter in allied hillforts, punitive raids, the use of deceitful stratagem as the only means to capture 'impregnable' hillfort kingdoms, etc. – are clearly reflected in how the Persian chronicles describe the precarious political situation of early fifteenth century North India.

Despite the political turmoil, the Tomars of Gwalior became famous throughout the region for managing to establish a thriving cultural center during the fifteenth and early sixteenth century, which attracted artists, scholars, poets, musicians and religious leaders from across the sub-continent. Fifteenth-century Gwalior clearly made its name as a place for significant artistic projects and innovation, especially in the domain of music, sculpture and vernacular poetry.[25] In its early years, however, when Nayacandra visited to present his own innovative tragic-historical epic in Sanskrit the claim to independence at the Tomar court must have been highly precarious. The literary challenge Nayacandra refers to may have been less than a decade after the Tomars grasped power. Nayacandra may not only have been "shaken into" creating his new poem on Hammīra by the "play of rashness arising from that (literary challenge)" (*tad-bhū-cāpala-keli*), but because he felt shaken by the political "games of recklessness on earth" (*bhū-cāpala-keli*) or the games of recklessness "arising from *him*" (*tad-bhū*), that is the

[23] Pauwels 2020: 12.

[24] We know that in 1365 Nayacandra as a young disciple (muni) made the first transcript of his guru Jayasiṃha Sūri's mahā*kāvya* about the Chalukya king Kumārapāla, see Dvivedi 1973: 33.

[25] See for example Granoff (2006) on the sculptural project of the colossal Jinas adorning the rocks of the fort; see Pollock (2006: 292, 394-6) on fifteenth-century Gwalior as a place where vernacular court poetry in North India emerged.

Tomar king himself.[26] The recklessness of kings - or the fickle nature of power – indeed constitutes one of the most defining themes of his poem.

5.2 Dangerous allusions and delusions: the Tomars' absence in the Chauhan past?

Paradoxically, one indication of the Tomars' presence in HMK lies in the striking absence of the Tomar name. Although there were clear ties between the Chauhans and Tomars, both in an earlier past and Nayacandra's own present, HMK is suspiciously silent about such connections. Nayacandra's great poem of Hammīra, although predominantly focusing on the Chauhans' decline between the rule of Pṛthvīrāja and Hammīra (ca. 1192-1301, though the exact dates don't really matter), might be more about the political problems of the present time: the troubling shift in power at the turn of fifteenth century after Timur's raid. This doesn't mean, of course, that Nayacandra was not genuinely interested in re-evaluating the Chauhan past.[27]

In this section I want to briefly explore in which way Nayacandra's present can be said to manifest itself in the poem. In particular, I want to reflect on the striking absence of the Tomars in Nayacandra's version of Chauhan history. Why are the Tomars not present in the grand scope of Nayacandra's epic, which presents itself as a history of North India more generally, from its mythological beginnings to the very present, covering the Chauhan's conflict with major dynastic clans throughout the subcontinent. Apart from the Chauhan heroes, many heroes from other regions and clans show up in this grand history, but not a single explicit reference to a Tomar king or warrior. Given the high probability that Nayacandra presented his poem at the court of Vīrama Tomar, this silence must have been audible.

I want to start this exploration of silence – this strikingly present absence of the Tomars - by drawing attention to a conspicuous change in the traditional Hammīra legend. Nayacandra may have purposefully changed the traditional pretext of war

[26] Such long compounds typically and purposefully allow for syntactic and semantic ambiguity: *tad-bhū,* can be read as "arising from that", but the first *tad* can also read as an independent word signifying "therefore", which would make *bhū* acquire its primary meaning as "earth".

[27] This chapter seeks to understand HMK in terms of a mirror-game with the present, and as a playful engagement with other Hammīra narratives. This doesn't deny the possibility that Nayacandra's re-evaluation of the Chauhan past was motived by what Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam in their study of historical literature in South India (2001) repeatedly refer to as a historiographical impulse to present a linear, analytical narrative, driven by concerns of factuality and causality (as on p. 61, 76, 99).

between Alauddin and Hammīra to create an allusive nod to his political present. In HMK, the conflict does not start because of Hammīra's refusal to hand over Mongol refugees - as in most, if not all known versions of the Hammīra story - but because the new ruler of Ranthambhor, *the very proud* (*akharva-garvavān,* 9.103) Chauhan ruler, has stopped communicating and paying tribute (*daṇḍam*). Alauddin therefore sends forth his brother Ulugh Khan on a destructive military expedition to Ranthambhor. What follows is a brief description of the horrifying devastations and suffering caused by the raiding in the country (*deśe*) (HMK, 9.105-8). To Nayacandra's early fifteenth century readers this change of the traditional pretext of war may sound like a re-enactment of the present-day political situation of North India, where kings like Vīrama Tomar –or more famous rebels like Sumer Chauhan - had to face several punitive raids because they stopped paying tribute, trying (stubbornly?) to consolidate their claims to independence.

The earlier framing of Pṛthvīrāja's story similarly starts with a description of destructive raids and the unbearable suffering of the people (3.1-3.14 and repeated in 3.51). Although I identified this opening as a clear modeling on Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava*, here too Nayacandra purposefully alludes to the present context when mentioning how a king of Gwalior (*gopācala*) named Candrarāja (3.2) approaches the Chauhan king for help, as the spokesmen of the unspecified 'kings of the west'. This is the only mention of Gwalior in the poem. The clan name of its ruler, however, remains conspicuously unspecified. If Nayacandra would have wanted to legitimate the Tomar's claim to power over Gwalior, this would have been the right moment to mention the Tomar name. If he had done this, it would show that two centuries earlier Gwalior was already governed by an illustrious Tomar ruler named Candrarāja. But he didn't. I have earlier suggested that this Candrarāja, the "Moon king", who is chosen as the spokesman of the oppressed kings, may be an oblique reference to Nayacandra himself, "whose 'stage' was bestowed by the city of Gwalior" (*gopācala-draṅga-vitīrṇa-raṅgaṃ,* 3.2).[28]

Apart from a brief discussion by the historian H.H. Dvivedi the significance of this character has been overlooked in previous studies about the HMK.[29] Dvivedi attempts to identify this Candrarāja with the last Tomar king of Delhi named Cāhaḍapāla, who is presented in both Persian and Indic sources as a devoted ally of Pṛthvīrāja. He goes by many different names, usually a variant of Govindarāja (but not Candrarāja!). Dvivedi explains how he seems to have helped Pṛthvīrāja Chauhan during his campaigns more than once and ultimately died fighting for him at the battle of Tarain against Muhammad Ghori. However, Dvivedi doesn't explain why Candrarāja of Gwalior is not named as a Tomar king, or why his role in this text doesn't really correspond to the 'historical role' given to Pṛthvīrāja's ally Cāhaḍapāla/Govindarāja. Moreover, the Gwalior Tomars don't

[28] See my discussion of the first three verses of canto three, in chapter two.

[29] Dvivedi 1973: 275-6.

seem to link themselves to the Delhi Tomars. At least not in Nayacandra's time, to which both the inscriptional records and HMK testify. I would therefore suggest that the character of Candrarāja of Gwalior forms part of Nayacandra's recurrent concern to imbue the traditional Hammīra legend with new, fictive characters. It allows him, in this particular case, to briefly put Gwalior on the map in his narrative, while remaining purposefully silent about who this 'Moon king' was, who was rendering (*nayantam*) his name true by gladdening the entire earth. Nayacandra "the Moon of Wisdom" (*naya,* "good conduct, prudence, political wisdom, etc.") is leaving it open for the audience to speculate who this Candrarāja may represent. The single surviving commentary, however, didn't give it much thought, and just states the obvious, that he was Candrarāja *gopācālīya*, Candrarāja of Gwalior.

Nayacandra's silence on the Tomar name remains suspicious. It is somewhat remarkable given the fact that the history of the Chauhans of Ajmer was intricately linked with the Tomars of Delhi, who appear to have ruled the Delhi region as former rivals and then subordinates of the Śākambharī Chauhans.[30] Did the Tomars of Gwalior intend to deny connections to that past or lineage? Moreover, HMK reveals a concern to 'name drop' warrior heroes from other clans, showing the network of alliances (and rivalry) with neighboring clans.[31] This practice is also evident in the slightly later Old-Gujarati epic *Kānhaḍade-prabandha*, where the eponymous Chauhan hero of Jalor is repeatedly praised as the ruler who earned the devotion of all the thirty-six Rajput clans, including the Tomars.[32] Worthy of note is how it explicitly praises the fort of Jalor as having a greater reputation than Gwalior and other formidable forts like that of Chittor.[33]

This practice of showing networks of alliances and emphasizing the clan's own superiority over their neighbors continues in later vernacular historical poems of the Mughal period. Allison Busch has discussed this as something specific to the historical poetry of the Mughal period, a novel characteristic that is not found in earlier historical poetry.[34] HMK and Kānhaḍade-prabandha can therefore be seen as forerunners to this practice, which would also become a hallmark of the cycle of poems known as *Pṛthvīrājarāso*. Cynthia Talbot has discussed this as a practice of political legitimation and

[30] See for example the discussion "From Tomar to Chauhan rule in Delhi inscriptions" in Talbot (2016: 90-93). But it seems that only later – in the bardic traditions, as well as in Khadgarai's *Gopācālakhyāna* and the undated and anonymous Sanskrit work *Indraprasthaprabandha* –, the Delhi Tomars are linked to the Tomars of Gwalior, see Dvivedi (1973: 261). The earliest inscriptions of the Gwalior Tomars in the fourteenth and fifteenth century do not make this link. Likewise, the early fifteenth century HMK differs from the later trend of establishing ancestral links with either the Chauhan dynasty or Tomars of Delhi.

[31] Especially evident at the end, right before the final war, in verses 13.201-5.

[32] See for example the translation of the text in Bhatnagar 1991: 75.

[33] Bhatnagar 1991: 71.

[34] Busch 2012: 305-6.

community building. By inserting various heroes of other clans into Pṛthvīrāja's life story as devoted allies, willing to give up their lives for the famous Chauhan king and marry off their daughters, texts like the *Rāso* create a sense of shared history and community, which may exert a power to mobilize new members.[35] Although HMK thus clearly anticipates this later trend by inserting heroes from other clans, Nayacandra seems to deliberately deny the Tomar name a place in Chauhan history. HMK as it were denies them a role among the ruling warrior clans from the Delhi Sultanate period. Can we see this silence as a subtle subversive act? Or perhaps Nayacandra is silencing the subordinate role played by the Tomars of Delhi, whose territory seems to have been annexed by the pre-Sultanate Chauhan empire?[36]

Despite the silence on the Tomars, it is possible that Nayacandra did attempt to make the ruler of Gwalior, Vīrama Tomar, present in the poem. There is something suspicious about the prominent role given to Hammīra's younger brother, Vīrama. It may not be a coincidence that he is the namesake of Nayacandra's patron Vīrama Tomar, the king of Gwalior who granted Nayacandra his *raṅga* 'stage' or color – if my reading of verse 3.2 is correct. I would argue that originally, before Nayacandra's poem, the Hammīra legend had little or nothing to say about Hammīra's brothers, or at least not about a brother called Suratrāṇa or Vīrama. The memory of whether Hammīra even had a younger and older brother might have been lost. Inscriptions and genealogical lists of the Chauhan dynasty, as the ones attached to Rājaśekhara's *Prabandhakośa* (1348), do not list the kings' brothers, when they don't make it to the throne.[37] I have discussed in chapter three how Nayacandra deliberately presents Hammīra as the less ideal middle brother, not for historiographical reasons, but to create a strong intertextual resonance with the core political problem in two foundational texts in the genre of patron-centered biography. His elder brother called Suratrāṇa, or "Sultan", is clearly one of those many fictional characters in the poem, like "Bhīmasiṃha" and "Dharmasiṃha", in the sense that they are not part of what I would call the traditional cast. I would dare to suggest that his younger brother Vīrama too is one of those fictional characters. He is 'invented' like Candrarāja of Gwalior, to allude to the present context, namely to the fact that

[35] This is the argument that runs throughout Talbot's work on *Pṛthvīrājarāso*, the main focus of her book on Pṛthvīrāja's many literary trajectories (2016). Another variation of this argument is found in her earlier work on the potentially mobilizing function of a Telugu historical *kāvya* from Andhra Pradesh, see Talbot 2000.

[36] As noted earlier, referring to Talbot 2016: 90-93. This history has proved confusing for historians, given the many contradictory sources. For example, there is confusion in the sources about a Pṛthvīrāja Tomar of Delhi and Pṛthvīrāja Chauhan of Ajmer, who lived at the same time, see Dvivedi 1973: 266, suggesting that they had close ancestral bonds.

[37] Pṛthvīrāja's brother Harirāja did, after which he is believed to have banished Pṛthvīrāja's son Govindarāja, as I briefly discussed in chapter two.

Nayacandra's poem was composed within the context of a literary challenge at the Gwalior court of a man called Vīrama Tomar.

I want to suggest, with some caution, that in HMK the possibly invented character of Vīrama, playing the part of Hammīra's younger brother, replaces the centrality of an important traditional character, the warrior named Jājā. This Jāja/Jajadeva/Jajjala plays a significant role in the Hammīra legend both before and after the composition of HMK.[38] This is clear from his central significance in later Hammīra narratives (and the paintings that illustrate it), and several stray verses in the early fourteenth-century metrical treatise *Prākṛtapiṅgalam*.[39] He even features as Hammīra's chief warrior in Vidyāpati's story, which otherwise deliberately narrows down the traditional cast of the legend.[40] As far as I know, the character of Vīrama, however, is not found in sources predating HMK. He also doesn't figure in Vidyāpati's tale. In Nayacandra's epic, by contrast, it is Vīrama who functions as the leading warrior. And this seems to go at the cost of the warrior Jājā.

To Jājā only referential attention is given in the tenth canto. He then re-emerges much later, at the end of the thirteenth canto, where he becomes some sort of caricature of the valiant warrior. The poem turns him into a faint echo or mirror-image of Mahimāsāhi (or Hammīra). Thus, right after describing the ceremony where Hammīra's wives and daughter enter the fire, the poem breaks the beautified depiction of this ritual by drawing attention to Jājā's 'heroic act'. We learn that he too, like the foreigner Mahimāsāhi, was sent away by the king. He appears to have been a foreigner too. In many sources he is cast as Jājā the Gurjar. But Nayacandra at the end of his poem casts this famous man as the only Chauhan warrior worthy of praise, for having, as they say (*kila*), stayed behind in the fort to protect it for another two days after Hammīra's death (14.16). Nayacandra shows how Jājā, like his 'foreign' counterpart Mahimāsāhi, also felt the need to prove his loyalty or his devotion to the warrior vow. Even though sent away, Jājā quickly returns to Hammīra, "having severed the heads of his eight wives and only son" (*kṣiptâṣṭastry-ekâṅgaja-mastakaḥ*, 13.187). As an act of devotion he proudly shows these nine heads to Hammīra, offering his own head to the Chauhan king, like in ancient times the ten-headed Rāvaṇa worshipped Śiva (13.189).

Nayacandra might be emphasizing that his poem is about what caused the *complete* destruction of the warrior clan of Ranthambhor, as Hammīra's father already ominously predicted in canto eight (*kulasya sarvasya vināśa-hetuḥ*, 8.74). There were no heirs left. The warriors 'heroically' sacrificed all their children and wives. Is HMK implicitly responding to people who claimed descent from the Chauhan warrior lineage of Ranthambhor? By

[38] See Dasharatha Sharma's discussion of this character, in Sharma 1975: 116-9.

[39] Verse 3 and 4, in the appendix to the edition of *Hammīrāyaṇa* (Nahata 1960: 39-40).

[40] There is, for example, only one Mongol warrior and no mention is made of Alauddin's generals Ulugh Khan and Nusrat Khan.

contrast, other thematically related texts, like the story of the Sonagīri Chauhans told in *Kānhaḍade-prabandha*, or some tales in Vidyāpati's *Puruṣaparīkṣā* thus emphasize that warriors, before giving up their lives, should secure the line of their family.[41]

My point worth emphasizing here is that Jājā's role in HMK is significantly small in comparison to his significance in other narratives. In HMK, it is Vīrama, Hammīra's younger brother, and not Jājā, who figures as the leading warrior hero. When Hammīra's eight chief warriors are listed in the eighth canto they are announced as "Vīrama and the others" (*viramâdyā*, 10.34). The names come only later in 10.38 and 10.39, with again "Śrī Virama" announced at the beginning as the foremost (*śrī-viramêndra*, 10.38).[42] The 'Vīrama and the others' is repeated throughout the poem. Thus, in Alauddin's heroic proclamation that he will completely destroy the entire Chauhan dynasty, he speaks of "the fickle heroes, Vīrama and the others", (*cañcalā vīramādyā vīrāḥ*, 10.84) and their maddening itch for battle (see my discussion in the previous chapter). Are such verses meant as a subtle dig at Vīrama Tomar? It is nevertheless also Vīrama who urges Hammīra to kill the traitor Ratipāla. It is also Vīrama who heads the warriors in the final battle:

> There was only one, who went in front of his king: that gem of heroes, Vīrama.
> He shone, as it were, like mighty Karṇa before the Kaurava king (Duryodhana).[43]

It is worth mentioning that the tragic *Mahābhārata* hero Karṇa is in fact a *Pāṇḍava,* from which the Tomars claimed descent, as asserted by Viṣṇudās in the prologue to his *Pāṇḍavacarit* (1435).[44] This comparison between Vīrama and Karṇa may therefore be more than coincidental.[45] Vīrama is thus one among several other heroes in HMK vying for the status of being the only or true (*eka*) gem of warriors - like Mahimāsāhi, or Alauddin's younger brother Ulugh Khan. He is also the one who out of fear for slander from the

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[41] Thus in *Kānhaḍade-prabandha*, Kānhaḍade feels blessed when a Brahmin assures him that "your descendants will regain the fort", Bhatnagar 1991: 90. In Vidyāpati's story of Jayacandra's defeat (tale 41, about his fatal infatuation with one of his wives) we learn how his wise minister-warrior Vidyādhara, before rushing into his death in the final battle against Shahabuddin, first sends his son outside the fort "for the sake of protecting the continuance of his lineage" (*vaṃśa-sthiti-rakṣârthaṃ*, Sanskrit quoted from edit. by Jha 1983: 228.)

[42] The older Koṭa mss. has *bīramâkhyo* "the one named Bīrama", which may sound closer to the vernacular pronunciation of his name, as evident from the Gwaliyari inscription of "Bīraṃmadeva" from 1405, discussed in Pollock 2006 (p.292) as of great historical significance to understand the turn to the vernacular in North India.

[43] ekas tasya nṛpasyâgre vīra-mauliḥ sa vīramaḥ |
babhau campâdhipaḥ prauḍhaḥ kauravâdhipater iva ||199||

[44] See Pauwels 2020, where she points out how this claim to the Pāṇḍava lineage appears for the first time in this text, discussing it as an attempt to claim *kṣatriya* status (p. 10).

[45] I owe this point to a comment from Eva de Clercq.

people (*janâpavāda-bhītena vīrameṇa*, 13.190) (about usurpation) grants the kingdom to Jājā, and fearlessly joins his brother to die on the battlefield.

I suggested in the previous chapters that Nayacandra tends to expose that human drive to achieve something that is unsurpassed, to be remembered as the 'one' hero, transcending the achievements of others. The poem repeatedly links this craving to the selfish operations of the ego, the delusional desire to be famous, while being driven by a fear to be blamed. The above verse, which praises Vīrama as 'the one', is thus preceded by a subtle critique saying that Hammīra's foremost warriors are "as it were supervised by their pride" or egos, their 'I-makers' (*ahaṅ-kārair ivâdhy-akṣair*, 9.197). It is the eye (*akṣa*) of the arrogant 'I' that guides them, exerting supervision (*adhy-akṣa*).

Although HMK might contain many allusive nods to the present, identifying them remains a rather speculative practice. Nayacandra, of course, avoids explicit allegorical identification between the characters of his poem and the courtly elite of his own present – Tomar or Chauhan. It was perhaps not only distasteful in *kāvya* poetry to explicitly hold up a mirror for the royal elite, but also dangerous. Many of the tales in the *prabandha* literature thematize the dangerous role played by the poet, when reminding the king of his royal duties.[46]

My point is that HMK seems to play a careful mirror-game with the present, for example by denying the Tomars a place in the history of the Chauhans. Is this an act of subversion? Or does it fit with the overall 'message' of the poem, namely that it is better not to adhere to the foolish heroic ideals held by Chauhan kings like Pṛthvīrāja and Hammīra? Perhaps a poem about the *complete* destruction of the Chauhan dynasty – leaving no heirs for succession – might implicitly legitimate the Tomars' ascendency to power in the Gwalior region, which was steeped in Chauhan history. Can the content of the poem be used for legitimizing purposes, or does it subvert the visions held by the elite? These functions can co-exist simultaneously. It also remains difficult to settle the matter, especially since it remains unclear *for whom* Nayacandra is really writing. Who is Nayacandra 'meant to please'? Is Nayacandra really representing the court of Vīrama Tomar, where the literary challenge took place, or did he come there to represent someone else, a neighboring, allied Chauhan king?

Perhaps it is better to settle for the option that, ultimately, Nayacandra is representing himself, the vision of a poet who attempts to bring a *new* poem of Hammīra. The whole playful and ambiguous framing betrays a certain boldness, showing how Nayacandra sees himself or his poetic project on top of the court and the values or ideals held by warrior elites, which the poem repeatedly undermines. Rather than in terms of a political critique or praise poem – with occasional allusive nods to the present - it may be more fruitful to

[46] See for example Granoff 1995 on the critical role of the medieval poet as the ethical consciousness of society.

understand Nayacandra's poetic project as a playful engagement with the poetry from other poets, not only with the Sanskrit poems of old, but with the newly flourishing traditions of stories and poetry about historical heroes. Some heroes would stay 'local', but other heroes, like Hammīra of Ranthambor, would become the subject of stories and poems that spread across North India.

5.3 Hammīra the 'good' (*sattva*) becomes the 'obstinate' (*haṭha*): stories of fame and blame

All those marvelous palaces,
all those gracious young women,
and that kingdom, brimming with wealth;
and all those elephants and horses.
No one has the strength to give up just one of these!
But this man left behind everything *for the sake of another* (*parārthe*)
when – alas! -he fell on the battlefield, this Hammīradeva.[47]

(Vidyāpati's Sanskrit story collection *Puruṣaparīkṣā,* (15th century), v.7 in the story of the compassionate hero)

Oh king, abandon your obstinacy (*haṭha*) now! Wouldn't you give just one horse to the Sultan?[48]

(Khem's Old-Hindi epic *Hammīrāyaṇa* (17th c.), canto 9, v.1145)

The first quote about Hammīra is the concluding verse of the second tale in Vidyāpati's famous collection of historical anecdotes, called the "Test of Man" (*Puruṣaparīkṣā*). In his story, called the story of the compassionate hero (*dayā-vīra-kathā*), Vidyāpati distils a near-perfect image of Hammīra, presumably out of many heroic (and conflicting) narratives that must have existed at the time. He significantly trims down Hammīra's legendary story to establish a type, illustrating the ideal of a hero who outshines everyone else in the virtue of compassion (*dayā, karuṇā*). He was so selfless that he gave up everything to protect another (*para*), the *yavana* ('foreigner') called Mahimāsāhi, who was

[47] te prasādā nirupama-guṇās tāḥ prasannās taruṇyo
rājyaṃ tac ca draviṇa-bahulaṃ te dvipās te turaṅgāḥ |
tyaktuṃ yan na prabhavati janaḥ kiñcid ekaṃ parārthe
sarvaṃ tyaktvā samiti patito hanta hambīradevaḥ || 7|| quoted from edition of Jha 1938: 20.
[48] haṭha aba choḍo rāvajī, eka ghoḍo sāhi nai deva, quoted from edition of Javaliya 1999:195.

indeed literally an 'other'. He is a *yavana,* someone with foreign origins, just like Hammīra's enemy Alauddin is cast as a *yavana*. Because Hammīradeva knew well that he was doing something against the rules of *nīti* "good governance", he decided to fight him alone, not wanting his soldiers, citizens or wives to die because of his decision. However, Vidyāpati has Hammīra's ministers explicitly say that Hammīra is completely free from blame (*vinâparādham*), because his actions are driven by compassion. The people around him were in fact so moved by Hammīra's selflessness that everyone – his soldiers, the Mongol himself, and his women – decided to give up their lives for the compassionate hero Hammīradeva.

The gist of Vidyāpati's tale seems radically opposed to the characterization of Hammīra Nayacandra's full-fledged epic rendering of his legend, which was roughly contemporaneous with the composition of Vidyāpati's story collection. It is also radically different from the 'gist' in later Old-Hindi epics, which turn Hammīra into the 'obstinate hero'. In the second quote above, from a seventeenth century epic, Hammīra is explicitly critiqued by his ministers for his obstinacy (*haṭha*). He was not willing to give up even one horse to save his kingdom. It is the more ambiguous heroic 'quality' of obstinacy, rather than compassion, that caused the massacre at Ranthambhor.

How to explain this difference in perspectives on the significance of Hammīra's tragedy? What is the overall appeal of Hammīra's story? Hammīra came to be associated with - or indeed exemplify - different, and seemingly opposing qualities. The story of his heroic resistance – or tragic defeat - must have signified something different for different people. In the first century after his death Hammīra seems to have predominantly enjoyed the positive status of being the 'good' or courageous (*sattva*), who defied the rules of policy (*nīti*) in order to protect an "other", the Mongol Mahimāsāhi and several other Mongols and their families. This corresponds with what is 'said' in the genealogical list of the Chauhans, attached as an appendix to several manuscripts of Rājaśekhara's *Prabandhakośa* (1348, Delhi). It adds to the date of the *last* ruler Hammīra, who was killed in battle in V.S.1358 (1301 CE), that this king was endowed with *sattva* (*prabhuḥ sattva-vān*).[49] Half a century after his death Hammīra was thus remembered as a courageous or virtuous ruler, unlike, for example his earlier – and equally famous predecessor – Vīsaladeva (Vigraharāja) who is described as *strī-lampaṭaḥ*, a "woman-addict".[50] When HMK's prologue thus 'quotes' the way tradition (*kila*) speaks about Hammīra's extraordinary quality of 'goodness' (*sattva* in 1.8 and 1.9), it looks like Nayacandra deliberately took up this idea as the starting point of his epic. It is also in accordance with this positive remembrance of Hammīra in the fifteenth century, that an author like Vidyāpati thus chose to cast Hammīra as an icon of compassion. He gives him the

[49] Jinavijaya 1935: appendix two, 134.

[50] ibid. 133.

prominent position as the second hero of his story collection, following the legend of king Vikramāditya. The latter hero typically heads the story collections about historical heroes, as in the *prabandha* literature. This is also reflected in a Mughal-period Old-Hindi historical epic by Amrit rai, the *Māncarit rāso* (1585), in an episode lamenting the death of legendary heroes. We first learn about the loss of king Vikramāditya, and then about other famous heroes like Bhoja of Dhar. Bold Hammīra (*haṭhī haṃvīra)* and his devoted warrior Jājā are also mentioned as exemplary figures who are now gone.[51]

We see that the story of Hammīra 'the good', the *sattvic,* clearly underwent significant changes from the fifteenth century onwards. In subsequent centuries we see that the more ambiguous epithet 'bold' or 'obstinate' *haṭha* came stick to his name. In the later cycle of '*Hammīrahaṭha*' poems (and the paintings illustrating the story) Hammīra would come to exemplify the recalcitrance of a courageous, but excessively stubborn and proud hero, unwilling to break his vow or indeed change his mind. In the process he seems to drag everyone along in a tragic, futile war that no one really seems to have wanted. A similar image already emerges in Nayacandra's HMK, which plays a clear 'balance game' with the arguably prevalent idea of Hammīra's exemplary 'goodness' or courageousness (*sattva*).

Of course, both the story of Hammīra 'the good' (*sattva*) and 'the obstinate' (*haṭha*) go back to the same core story or history, which clearly reflects - and naturally also distorts -a set of memorable events that actually took place around 1301, the year Alauddin managed to conquer the fort of Ranthambhor after a long siege.

Because it is central to the argument of this chapter that there is a traditional heroic core to Hammīra's story - which Nayacandra's HMK radically alters, inverts and, arguably, subverts – this section elaborates on the core elements constituting the 'traditional story', as it must have been told in Nayacandra's time. I don't claim that there is such thing as *one* original story, from which later authors deviate, and which we can reconstruct through comparison between older and newer versions. Rather, I want to identify core elements that make up each story, while highlighting that there is a more or less fixed sequence. I will make some comparative remarks to show how authors play with these elements: they can be downplayed, silenced, aggrandized, displaced, disguised as something else, inverted, subverted, etc.

It can be useful to understand these as conscious literary strategies, carefully crafted by poets or story tellers who seek to bring their own, novel version. In other words, complex literary narratives do not just 'reflect' how a particular king is remembered at a given time, but they literally play with historical memories – and perhaps effectively

[51] The episode is discussed in Busch 2012: 312, as part of several "passages of deep cynicism about contemporary politics [which] mitigate, and complicate, the fulsome expression of royal glory that is otherwise the expected focus of texts in the carita or "biography" genre" (p.311).

make use of their fuzzy, contradictory nature. The audience thus expects a familiar set of narrative elements – corresponding with how they remember Hammīra's story - and a 'traditional cast' making up the traditional Hammīra story: the Mongols taking refuge in Ranthambhor, Hammīra's heroic vow, the Sultanate's envoy offering conditions for a truce, the treason of Hammīra's two generals Raṇamalla and Rāyapāla (their names differ), the extraordinary military skill of Alauddin's brother-general Ulugh Khan and the death of his general Nusrat Khan, the danger of a famine in the Chauhan fort, the collective self-immolation (*jauhar*) of the women, Hammīra's self-decapitation, etc. But depending on the author's vision these elements can be treated differently, their order changed, or 'traditional' significance altered, sometimes radically, as I hope to demonstrate in this chapter.

Most of the available literary sources (in both Persian and Indic language) before and roughly contemporaneous with HMK represent Hammīra as an exceptional historical figure, whose heroic resistance was, more or less, worthy of admiration. Indeed, Hammīra's resistance appears to have been more memorable during the fourteenth century than the struggles of other kings who were defeated by Alauddin. For example, in the *Nābhinandana-jinoddhāra-prabandha* (1333) of the Jain writer Kakka Sūri the defeated Hammīra of Ranthambhor emerges as the only "proud and brave" ruler in a series of verses enumerating Alauddin's successful military campaigns (1297-1313). [52] Others fled or bent their heads in submission. Interestingly, from the fifteenth century onwards epic poems start to emerge about these other rulers, who seem to retell the story of these 'forgotten heroes' by modelling their story along the lines of the Hammīra's legend.[53]

In what follows, I give a condensed outline of the Hammīra narrative, based on the shared elements of the earliest extant versions (14th-15th centuries) which treat Hammīra's story at some length. In chronological order, we have Amir Khusrau's *Khazā'in al-Futūḥ* (c.1311-12), Abdul Malik Isami's *Futuh-us-Salatin* (c. 1350), Nayacandra's *Hammīra-mahākāvya* (c. 1402-1423), Vidyāpati's *Puruṣaparīkṣā* (c. 1412-1416) and Bhāṇḍau Vyāsa's *Hammīrāyaṇa* (c. 1481).[54]

[52]See Sharma 1956: 96.

[53] I return to this point in the conclusion of this dissertation.

[54] For the Persian texts I have consulted translations of the text, for Amir Khusrau's *Khazā'in al-Futūḥ* the translation of Muhammad Habib (1931), and for Isami's *Futuh-us-Salatin* the translation by Agha Mahdi Husain (1977). I thank Christopher Diamond for sharing his unpublished paper "Pragmatics and Ideals: Masculine-Warrior Ethics & Memory in three tales of the Hammīra narrative", based on two conference talks on Hammīra (one at Washington University, Seattle, 14-15 September 2017, and the next year at the 25th European Conference on South Asian studies (ECSAS), Paris, 24-27 July). It includes a more detailed comparison and contextualization of the narratives of Isami, Vidyāpati and Bhāṇḍau Vyāsa.

The Hammīra story always revolves around several Mongol warriors (their number varies from one to four) who had fled from Alauddin's service to seek shelter in the Chauhan kingdom. They appear to have revolted against Alauddin's brother and general Ulugh Khan on returning from a military campaign in Gujarat (1299). Both Ulugh Khan and the Mongols, especially one named Mahimāsāhi (<Muhammad Shah), play a major role in all the Hammīra narratives. The reason for the Mongols' flight to Ranthambhor forms an important axis of tension, and differs in several narratives.[55] Vidyāpati, for example, is deliberately silent about which crime they committed against Alauddin. Whatever the reason, Hammīra heroically vows to protect these Mongols – traitors or not - at all costs. The Mongols' refuge at Hammīra's kingdom is typically presented at the outset of each narrative. This is also how HMK 'quotes' the gist of his story in the ambiguous question of his prologue (1.9). However, in the actualized narrative itself, the significance of this context is radically altered and inverted, as I show in the next section.

Important to remember is that the Mongols' flight to Ranthambhor and Hammīra's vow to protect them forms the traditional *casus belli,* the pretext of Alauddin's long siege against Ranthambhor. It is connected to another central episode in which Ulugh Khan, through an envoy (called Molhaṇa in most narratives), requests Hammīra to hand over the Mongol traitors.[56] The proud Hammīra, of course, refuses to break his vow of protection. Let me quote an extract from this message from Isami's Persian text, the earliest extant narrative rendering of this crucial episode:[57]

> 'O protector of rais of India! You are one of our friends. Why are you abandoning your friendship for the emperor? I am told that two of my enemies – Qamizi Muhammad and Kabhu – who are really traitors and mischief-mongers and have dug me in the ribs – have crept into your dominions

[55] Interestingly, both HMK (10.21) and Yahya's TMS (Basu 1932: 75) link it to their unwillingness to hand over the loot. The later Old-Hindi texts create a story about Mahimāsāhi's illicit love making with one of Alauddin's favorite courtesans, while the Sultan was out on a hunting expedition. Out of fear for what the Sultan would do to him, Mahimāsāhi fled to the kingdom of Hammīra. As for these later versions, I'm mostly familiar with the story of Khem's Old-Hindi epic *Hammīrāyaṇa* (17th c.), which is edited by Javaliya 1999, with Hindi translation, and the story depicted in the painting series of the Punjab hills, discussed in Shastri 1976.

[56] Including HMK and all the later vernacular epics. The fact that it occurs in Isami's text which predates HMK more than half a century, shows that already from early on Hammīra's story centered on his heroic vow to protect the Mongol refugees/traitors.

[57] Amir Khusrau's *Khazā'in al-Futūḥ* (c.1311-12) does not contain this episode. Although it contains probably the earliest written account of Hammīra's story, it doesn't dramatize the events in the way later narratives do, avoiding, for example, the use of real dialogues as in Isami's text. It also lacks the episode of Hammīra's heroic vow. But the basic narrative elements are present: the treacherous Mongols taking shelter in Ranthambhor, Alauddin's encircling of the fort leading to a famine, and the *jauhar* in the fort preceding the final battle, perhaps the first recorded in history, becoming a trope in later Rajput literature, as explained in Bednar 2007: 58.

and are still with you. They grew to a stature under my protection but have betrayed me. How can they be of any use to you when they have been treacherous to me? You should kill them if you are a friend of ours, since friendship and enmity are incompatible. Should you fail to comply with my request, you will have to be ready for war.'[58]

Although no specific reason is given for what the Mongols have done, the passage hints at an important problem in the Hammīra legend: is it really the right thing to put the whole kingdom at risk to give shelter to some mischievous *traitors*? Hammīra's ministers also point out this problem to the king:

You are aware that it is dangerous to be on bad terms with the Turks, since the world today is under their rule. *If you desire security for your dynasty and family*, do your utmost not to be hostile to the Turks. You had better surrender those two tyrants who have betrayed their own benefactor. An advice other than this, Your Highness, would be mischievous and disastrous.[59]

Note how like in HMK, Isami raises *the problem of dynastic continuation*. In both texts Hammīra is advised not to make a conflict with the more powerful Turks. And both texts highlight how Hammīra, as a true *kṣatriya,* deems the observance of his vow and reputation of his name more important than securing the continuation of the Chauhan line and the protection of his kingdom. This is how Isami lets Hammīra speak:

"This counsel is not worthy of acceptance. Those who have come seeking shelter under me are secure even against the outrages of the sky. I shall continue to protect my refugees to the last ounce of blood in my veins, even if the Turks from all parts of the world join hands in attacking me. *Should I betray weakness and surrender my refugees into the hands of the enemy, I would be disgraced through the ages and my name held in bad repute*."[60]

It is this persistent adherence to his vow that gained him the epithet of *haṭha,* bold or stubborn Hammīra.[61] Worthy of attention is how in Isami's version, just like in Nayacandra's poem, Hammīra's response seems almost motivated by a 'fear' to be regarded as weak and become blamed by future generations. Like in HMK, the Chauhan king is somehow faced with a dilemma between the pursuit of fame or fortune. Even though it is not really a dilemma for the 'obstinate' king himself, it does form an

[58] Quoted from translation by Husain 1977: 446.

[59] Ibid. Emphasis added.

[60] Ibid. Emphasis added.

[61] As noted earlier. It is also, for example, the title given to two late vernacular Hammīra epics - a *Hammīra-haṭha* by Candraśekhara (1846) and by Gvāla (1827) - and a beautiful series of miniature paintings of the Kangra school, which are said to form the inspiration of these poems, see the discussion of these paintings and the story of 'Hammira's obstinacy' in Shastri (1976), which includes a comparison with Nayacandra's HMK.

important axis of tension in the Hammīra legend. This can also be seen in the later *Hammīrāyaṇa* of Bhāṇḍau Vyāsa (1481). Here, Hammīra responds to the request of Ulugh Khan's envoy that he prefers fame (*kīrati,* Skt. *kīrti*) to Fortune (*lāchī,* Skt. *laksṃī*) – the king's symbolic wife, who normally represents his most important royal duty: securing the well-fare of the kingdom.[62]

It is not unlikely that many later authors of Hammīra poems, and related texts, were familiar with Nayacandra's epic, as I intend to explain later. In any case, of importance for the point of this section is this: in all Hammīra narratives the conflict between Alauddin and Hammīra unfolds because of the Chauhan king's legendary rejection to hand over the Mongols. Eventually, this leads to a long war which takes the lives of thousands of people on both sides, including the death of Alauddin's foremost general Nusrat Khan. The Sultanate's camp in the end manages to encircle the fort, a strategy meant to exhaust the provisions in the fort and starve the inhabitants to despair. Even though he is facing certain defeat, bold Hammīra decides not to surrender. He chooses to put up one last and fatal military confrontation and orders the women of the fort to commit *jauhar,* the practice of collective self-immolation their *before* their husbands rush into the battlefield to face certain defeat.[63] In the final battle Hammīra performs the extraordinary feat of cutting off his own head and sacrifices it to Śiva, after which he attains heaven.

This topic of *jauhar* provides an important axis of tension. Do the women choose such fate themselves (as in Vidyāpti's story), or are they *ordered* to kill themselves to preserve the honor of their husbands (as in Nayacandra's and Isami's version)? Moreover, what if, in the end - at least in the retrospective vision of a writer – it turns out that the Chauhan defeat may not have been that certain, as in HMK? This kind of tragic irony is at the heart of one of the later *Hammīrahaṭha* poems and painting series, which are discussed in an article by Hiranand Shastri.[64] He explains how the Chauhan camp ends up winning the final battle. Rejoicing in victory, the proud and boastful Hammīra orders his men to raise the banners of the defeated enemy, as if to humiliate them. Unfortunately, the women, looking down on the battlefield from the Ranthambhor fort, misinterpret this signal. Seeing the banners *from the enemy*, they wrongly think Hammīra lost the battle. When

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[62] "I prefer Fame, Molhā (name of the envoy), you take Fortune" (*kīrati molhā! variji maiṃ, lāchī tuṃ le jāha*, *Hammīrāyaṇa* v.153, briefly discussed by Sharma in Nahata 1960: 55 and 60.

[63] Bednar (2007) has explained this as an inversion of the act of *satī,* the self-immolation of women on the funeral pyre *after* the death of their husbands, discussing *jauhar* as an act of heroic self-sacrifice, mirroring the feats of their husbands, and integral to the emerging warrior-ethos of Rajputs.

[64] Shastri (1976), who discusses a version of Candraśekhara's *Hammīrahaṭha*, illustrating a series of court paintings, titled *Hamir-hath-saka*, which Shastri aptly chose to translate as "The suicide caused by the obstinacy of Hamir" (1976: 25), where saka (suicide) refers to both the practice of collective immolation of the woman (*jauhar*) and the male warrior's rushing into battle in the face of certain defeat.

Hammīra proudly returns to the fort as victor, he sees that the women have committed *jauhar.* Not able to bear this painful twist of fate, he decides to sever his own head. The whole massacre at Ranthambhor becomes extremely and almost comically futile. It is worth mentioning that this plot twist is strikingly similar to Nayacandra's story of the death of 'Bhīmasiṃha' (in canto nine), Hammīra's valorous and rash general.[65] In this scene the Chauhan soldiers, ordered by 'Lion Bhīma', literally signal their own defeat by sounding the drums looted from the enemy, making the dispersed enemy come back and kill Bhīmasiṃha and his army.[66]

A final important element in the Hammīra legend is that the Mongol refugees decide to fight along their protector and new lord. They therefore disprove the accusation of their worthless unloyalty. The Neo-Muslim Mongol 'other' thus becomes the loyal devotee of Hammīra; he is even cast as the supreme *kṣatriya* in HMK. The Hammīra legend is clearly deeply concerned with the confrontation with the ethnic and cultural 'other', not only through the theme of the Mongols becoming 'Rajput', but also because of Hammīra's stubborn refusal to marry off his daughter to the Sultan. Hammīra both embraces the cultural 'other', while also refusing the possibility of a political alliance with the cultural other. It is not possible for Hammīra to negotiate marriage politics with the Sultan, one of the major strategies to expand power/show subservience. But it is also an important means to establish peaceful relations between neighbouring centres of power, and thus prevent a lot of suffering. Obstinacy, in such matters, may not be the right choice.[67]

Of course, this sketch of the Hammīra story (and its thematic angles and tensions) doesn't do justice to the many important details and differences making up the specificity

[65] I discussed his story briefly in the previous chapter, in the section about his intelligent counterpart 'Dharmasiṃha'.

[66] There seems to be a variation of this episode too in the Persian Chronicler's Fersishta's (1560-1620) *Tarikh-i-Firishta,* where Ulugh Khan's confrontation with a certain "Bheem Dew, Raja of Runtunbhore" is said to precede the war with Hammīra, see the translation of Briggs 1829: 328-329.

[67] This becomes the major theme in *Kānhaḍade-prabandha* (1455), which seems to invert the problem of the Hammīra legend. In this epic, it is the Sultan who offers her daughter to become the wife of Kānhaḍade's son Vīramde, who stubbornly refuses to marry the daughter of a Turk. The envoy named Golhaṇa - possibly a nod to the Molhaṇa of the Hammīra legend – feels insulted. (The extracts below are quoted from the translation by Bhatnagar 1991: 58. We immediately learn after Vīramde's rejection that "[t]o the envoy, Vīrama's words apparently made little sense. (...) How confused and impractical they were! (...) Now Chauhāna is clinging to his honour and prestige however much the Sultān might do favour to him." "He felt shamed and humiliated that the Sultān's offer and his advice had been spurned so bluntly." When telling the Sultan about his vain efforts, he concludes that the "Chauhāna is very hostile and very proud, indeed."

of each narrative.[68] One of the points I want to emphasize with the above outline is that both Persian, Sanskrit and Old-Hindi literary sources present Hammīra's heroic vow to protect the Mongol refugees not only as *the pretext of the war*, but as *the heroic core* of Hammīra's legend. Even Isami's account presents Hammīra's decision rather sympathetically, as a foolish though heroic act.[69] In nearly all Hammīra-narratives this is very explicitly presented as the cause (*nimitta*) of the conflict.[70] HMK also quotes this both in the beginning and end of his poem as the cause of his downfall, but puts this in the mouth of what *others* said (1.9, 14.17, which explicitly mentions this as the traditional cause *nimittam*). But in HMK this 'cause' is given an entirely different place and meaning in the narrative sequence of Hammīra's tale. Nayacandra, as I try to demonstrate below, *inverts* the traditional significance of his vow of protection as an act of heroism. In addition to this central episode surrounding the 'cause' of the conflict, the Hammīra legend is deeply concerned with the possibility of meaningful relationships between the ethnic and cultural 'other.' Vidyāpati thus turns Hammīra into the exemplary hero of compassion (*dayā-vīra*) who gave up everything for the sake of another, a *yavana,* like Alauddin himself.

It seems reasonable to assume that various other oral and written versions existed prior to the composition of HMK, which must have varied in length and language, and endorsed the centrality of Hammīra's unwavering adherence to his heroic vows. There are seven *Apabhraṃśa* stanzas on Hammīra in the metrical handbook *Prākṛtapiṅgalam* (ca. 1315), which are often said to be from a lost *Hammīra-rāsa*.[71] These poems, together with a

[68] To make sense of each narrative as an object in its own right it is worth exploring the socio-political and literary context of each narrative into depth and not fall into the trap of over-generalization in which each Hammīra narrative becomes the expression of the heroic tastes and political concerns of an elite warrior ethos.

[69] Moreover, he explicitly says how "the brave Hindu Rai Hammir [ ] by his wisdom [ ] frustrated all the plans devised by the Turks."(translation quoted from Husain (1977: 449). This point is also made in Diamond's unpublished "Pragmatics and Ideals".

[70] Thus, in *Puruṣaparīkṣā* Hammīra's courtiers remind him that "this (conflict) has indeed started because you gave him protection" (*tad-rakṣā-nimittaka evāyam ārabdho*, Jha 1983: 18).

[71] The existence of this work is a debatable point. It is usually ascribed to Hammīra's supposed bard Śārṅgadhara, who is in fact only known as the compiler of a Sanskrit anthology called *Śārṅgadhara-paddhati* (c.1363), about which more in the fourth section. The identification of Śārṅgadhara as Hammīra's bard is probably first made by Colonel James Tod in his Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan (Vol II, 1832: 452), where he says that he has translated two works of Śārṅgadhara with the help of his Jain guru, a "Hamir Rásá" and a "Hamir Cavyá", and also briefly discussed in the preface to HMK's first edition (Kirtane 1879: i). Scholars might have taken over Tod's idea of Śārṅgadhara as Hammīra's bard and ascribed the Apabhraṃśa verses of Hammīra in *Prākṛtapiṅgalam* to his hand. I leave it in the middle whether they are just stray verses or from a now lost *Hamir-rāsā*, the latter option being suggested in the preface to the edition of the *Prākṛtapiṅgalam* (Vyas 1959: iv). The verses on Hammīra from *Prākṛtapiṅgalam* are added as appendix (1) to the edition of *Hammīrāyaṇa* (Nahata 1960: 38-43), accompanied with Hindi translation. See Ollett (2017: 186-7) for a

few Sanskrit verses on Hammīra preserved in the Sanskrit anthology *Śārṅgadhara-paddhati* (1363), and Hammīra's story as narrated by Isami (1350), provide only a glimpse of an emerging 'Hammīra tradition' in Nayacandra's time. They explain why Nayacandra at the end of his poem refers to the emergence of a wide-spread tradition of poems (*kāvya-paramparām,* 14.1) composed by "learned men" (*budhās)* who praised Hammīra's exceptional character and lamented his tragic death.[72]

These poems may have just been 'floating verses', in the sense that they are not necessarily taken from a larger epic, similar to HMK. Even though there may have been fully-fledged literary renderings of Hammīra's story into an epic before the composition of HMK, the fact remains that Nayacandra's epic is the earliest extant Hammīra epic. It is possible therefore, that HMK was the first 'serious' *literary* reworking of Hammīra's story. And if there were epic poems of Hammīra before HMK, then we could say that, up till now at least, Nayacandra's *new poem* of king Hammīra managed to successfully over-shadow their existence. Nevertheless, even though Nayacandra's HMK is the earliest extant epic rendering of the Hammīra story, I believe it is possible to grasp the poem's playful engagement with a 'traditional story'. Whether it already existed in an epic, written version, or only in an oral tradition, doesn't really matter in this regard.

I want to address one final point about the many different Hammīra stories before discussing how Nayacandra seems to invert the traditional heroic core about the Chauhan king's legendary heroic vow. Despite the dominantly sympathetic presentation of Hammīra in Nayacandra's time, the story material must have often left room for critical response and ambivalence. Questions of blame on part of Hammīra's heroic decision seem implicit in each extant version; they are unavoidable, even in Vidyāpati's highly condensed and sympathetic story.[73] Regardless of the heroic characterization of

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discussion of *Prākṛtapiṅgalam*'s language as Avahaṭṭha, also noting the verses about Hammīra, and pointing to the significance of this work for our understanding of the emergence of vernacular literature.

[72] I elaborate on this point in the fourth section.

[73] The ambivalence surrounding Hammīra's character is also noted in Talbot's (2012) discussion of *Sūrjana-carita* (c. 1590) where, conspicuously, in opposition to an earlier praiseworthy description of the Chauhan king, "Hammira's fate is cited as an example of one to avoid" (p. 347). In the case of *Puruṣaparīkṣā*, its author Vidyāpati tries so hard to create an ideal image of Hammīra and silence the topic of blame that one cannot but see through his strategies – perhaps intentionally. For example (Sanskrit quotations are from Jha's edition 1983), he is conspicuously silent about the Mongols' treason, a problem that is raised two times, but never made explicit. We know that there is "some reason" (*kenâpi nimittena*) for Alauddin's anger and that Mahimāsāhi has been an offender (*āpathya-kāriṇam*), but Mahimāsāhi himself purposefully silences the fact that he betrayed his former lord when he tells (or lies to) Hammīra that there was no offence (*vinâparādham*). In the same vain, his courtiers have to explicitly tell Hammīra that their lord is without offence (*nir-aparādho*) for having caused the conflict by his heroic vow of protection. Interestingly, Vidyāpati also emphasizes that the women themselves chose to immolate themselves, unlike the narratives of Isami,

Hammīra, his tragic story demands reflection on whether the Chauhan king's heroism is (really) worthy of admiration or emulation. Is it really justified to give up the entire kingdom by protecting traitors? To which extent does the hero's desire for fame – or fear of shame, as implied in both Isami's and Nayacandra's text – legitimate sacrificing the entire kingdom and make an end to the dynastic line? As I explained in the previous chapter, a tragic story like that of Hammīra evokes questions on causality -the reason of defeat (*vināśa-hetu*)[74] - in relation to personal responsibility and the (in)evitability of the events leading to the massacre at Ranthambhor: who or what is to blame? How do tragic heroes fulfill or confront their fates? In this chapter I hope to show that HMK also reveals a concern with a meta-reflection on the 'fate' of historical heroes in general, and how they tend to generate a wealth of conflicting or competing stories and memories. When new perspectives or added, or older ones changed or inverted, a story of fame can easily turn into blame, and vice versa.

5.4 Inverting the heroic core: Bhojadeva becomes Mahimāsāhi

I highlighted in the second section of this chapter that - somewhat conspicuously - Nayacandra's version of the Hammīra legend starts with the Chauhan king's refusal to pay tribute to the Sultanate. I suggested that this change of the pretext of war may have been meant as an allusion to Nayacandra's political present. But what happens to the traditional pretext of war which *is* what the Hammīra legend was all about? To my knowledge, in all Hammīra narratives preceding and following HMK, the pretext of war and thematic core revolves around the Chauhan king's altruistic vow to protect a few Mongol refugees who had fled from Alauddin's service. But this is not the case in Nayacandra's HMK. So what happens to this central element? How does the heroic core fit into Nayacandra's deeply tragic, and subversive vision on the last Chauhan ruler?

I want to suggest that Hammīra's heroic vow of *protecting* the Mongols is not central to Nayacandra's vision of Hammīra's story. Indeed, we have to 'wait' ten cantos before hearing something about the Mongols in Hammīra's kingdom. And when this happens

Nayacandra, and Bhāṇḍau Vyāsa, which make rather explicit that the women are given no choice. It clearly shows that there might have been different opinions surrounding the heroic value of *jauhar*.

[74] This concern is repeatedly made explicit in verses referring to the "cause of destruction" of the clan or kingdom, as, for example, in in 8.74 (*kulasya sarvasya* ***vināśa-hetuḥ***), 8.94 (*rājya-saudhasya* ***vināśa-hetuḥ***) and 10.28 (*tadrājyasya* ***vināśa-hetur***).

the conflict between Alauddin and Hammīra has already started. Importantly, the war thus did *not* start because of Hammīra's heroic vow to protect the Mongols at all costs, but because of a *misplaced vow of silence* (*muni-vratam*), which ironically signals the Chauhan king's problem with communication (see my discussion in the previous chapter). This 'vow of silence' eventually builds up to the seminal scene about Hammīra's mistreatment of his wise ministers, Dharmasiṃha, and his half-brother Bhojadeva. The latter, out of pride or self-respect, feels forced to avenge the inflicted injustice. Bhojadeva thus goes over to Alauddin's side, becoming his refugee as it were. It looks like the whole ninth canto, starting with Hammīra's vow of silence and ending with Bhoja's flight to the Sultanate replaces or indeed inverts the traditional story about Hammīra's vow to protect the Mongol Mahimāsāhi. Quite curiously we thus never *directly* hear about the Mongols taking refuge in the kingdom of Hammīra, and the Chauhan king's decision to give them shelter. The audience has to presume this already took place sometime before (perhaps indeed in other Hammīra narratives). In other words, the central and seminal episode of the Hammīra legend – in which the Chauhan king is able to show his heroic altruism after the Mongols' flight to Ranthambhor - does not take place in HMK. We do hear about Hammīra's heroic vow in the eleventh canto. But when we reach this point in the narrative, his selfless image has already suffered severe damage.

The Mongols are first introduced in the poem 'in passing'. Interestingly, it is Mahimāsāhi's counterpart the 'refugee' Bhoja who brings up the topic when he tells his new lord Alauddin about the fact that the Mongols are serving Hammīra. This happens in Bhoja's long response to a question from Alauddin, who asked how Hammīra can be defeated. We have seen in the previous chapter how Bhoja first describes Hammīra in the panegyric mode as the most virtuous and awakened ruler alive, before breaking the eulogistic tone and subtly revealing Hammīra's 'blind spot' (10.28-30). It is in 'praising' Hammīra that Bhoja mentions how even the Mongols serve him:

> Those who uprooted the pride of your brother
> who held his mind firm when asking for the looted wealth...
> Those who with their bursting warriorhood were unafraid
> to consider you not even the worth of a straw...
> Even Mahimāsāhi and those other northern men serve him!
> How then is it possible to conquer the illustrious hero Hammīra on the battlefield
> in mere play?[75]

[75] tvad-bhrātur luṇṭitârthârthana-nibiḍa-mater mānam unmūlayanto
niḥsaṅkaṃ menire tvāṃ sphuṭa-subhaṭatayā ye tṛṇāyâpi nâiva |
audīcyās te 'pi sevāṃ vidadhati mahimāsāhi-mukhyā yadīyāṃ
sa śrī-hammīra-vīraḥ samara-bhuvi kathaṃ jīyate līlayâiva ||21||

As the representation of the Mongols in the Persian accounts of Alauddin's conquest, Mahimāsāhi and the others are introduced for the first time in HMK as traitors.[76] Of course, the ostensible emphasis of this verse is that Mahimāsāhi and the other Mongols are fearless warriors serving Hammīra. How can he then be defeated? But unlike Vidyāpati's story for example, Nayacandra deliberately chooses not to be silent about the fact that these Mongols had rebelled against their former lord, Ulugh Khan and his brother the sultan Alauddin. Bhoja also explains the reason for their treason: they refused to hand over the loot. This element resonates with the poem's repeated emphasis on the problem of greed, as a driving force for human action.[77] It is somewhat ironic therefore that later in this canto the Mongols accuse the formerly described "pure-minded Bhoja" (*śuddha-dhīḥ,* 9.176) as being "ungrateful Bhojadeva" (*bhojadevaḥ kṛta-ghno,* 10.65), even though the reader learned that Bhoja became the victim of Hammīra's greed and misplaced insults.

The role of the unfortunate Bhoja is clearly being played out against the traditional role of the Mongol Mahimāsāhi. It is the Mongols who request Hammīra to punish 'ungrateful' Bhoja. They blame him for making the hero's vow (*vīra-vrataṃ*) appear as dissolved, for he is enjoying his new residence in a town called Jāgarā (10.65). This town was earlier described as belonging to the lord of the Mongols (*mudgaleśa-nagarīṃ*, 10.10). This is an important detail to understand how Nayacandra is building up to a reversal of the traditional story line. By making Alauddin grant Bhoja the city of the Mongols, Nayacandra is clearly suggesting that the wise 'refugee' Bhoja – from whom everything was taken by Hammīra/Dharmasiṃha - is taking the place, quite literally, of the virile refugee Mahimāsāhi in the traditional story. It is also the Mongols who destroy Bhoja's new residence at *their* city of Jāgarā and capture his family. And this happened at Hammīra's command, which was "like Lady Victory's spell of delusion" (*jaya-śrīyo mohana-mantravat*, 10.68).

It is this punishment of the ill-fated Bhojadeva that moves the canto to its conclusion and towards another interesting reversal of story lines. Bhoja manages to escape from the massacre and expresses his deep grief and frustration to Alauddin. Bhoja's laments instigate the Delhi Sultan to proclaim a long heroic speech, in which he promises to destroy "the complete Chauhan clan" (*nikhile śrīcāhamāne kule*, 10.87.). With the Mongols' request to punish Bhoja, the earlier conflict over paying tribute has thus transformed into Alauddin's heroic resolve to destroy the arrogant ruler of the Chauhan kingdom. As I

[76] See Bednar 2017 for a study of Mahimāsāhi in Persian accounts and HMK. He does miss this first reference to Mahimāsāhi in HMK, and how it thus corresponds with the Persian accounts.

[77] As discussed in the previous chapters, it is the reward of plunder that attracts warriors to the battlefield, and it is the greed for the apsaras that makes them averse to life. It is also a blinding greed that made Hammīra unjustly take away everything from Bhoja and the other citizens.

explained in the previous chapter it is Bhoja's fate that awakens the lion Alauddin from his sleep.

And still we haven't heard of Hammīra's own heroic vow to protect the Mongols who fled from Alauddin's service. Instead we are given the story of how the foolish Hammīra causes his virtuous half-brother Bhoja to flee his service and take residence in the city of the Mongols, granted by Alauddin. Whereas most Hammīra narratives start with the episode of Hammīra's vow to the virile refugee Mahimāsāhi, in HMK the first two cantos about Hammīra's rule *culminate in the heroic vow of the antagonist Alauddin*, promising Hammīra's mistreated half-brother Bhoja to destroy the Chauhan dynasty. A clear reversal has taken place. Nayacandra emphasizes the importance of Bhoja's story in his version of the Hammīra legend by having Bhoja proclaim that what happened to him, will never go to oblivion (10.74), even after his death. As noted earlier, there is some truth in this. Interestingly indeed, Bhoja – perhaps Nayacacandra's Bhoja - seems to recur in the later vernacular epic *Kānhaḍade-prabandha*, where he is presented as the renowned and loyal warrior who died fighting while serving Alauddin against the ruler of Siwāna.[78]

After Bhoja's reversive role finishes with the end of the tenth canto, the poem finally introduces the traditional heroic core in the eleventh canto. It is there that we finally hear about Hammīra's vow. However, Nayacandra entirely alters its significance as a heroic act. The point of importance is that the whole canto is framed as a trap, a distraction maneuver intended to deceitfully (*chalena,* 11.23) lead Hammīra's attention away from Ulugh Khan's real move, namely to safely install his troops around the fort of Ranthambhor, while remaining free from distress (*apāsta-dainyaḥ*) (11.24). Ulugh Khan, the clever gamester (*kitava,* 11.22), explains to the general Nusrat Khan that it is better to first deceive (*vipratārya*) the Chauhan warriors "*under the pretext* of peace negotiations" (*sandhi-miṣeṇa,* 11.21). After all, he says, in matters of skill to subdue one's enemy "experts in political wisdom do not praise valor" (*na vikramaṃ nīti-vidaḥ stuvanti*, 11.21).

Ulugh Khan therefore sends forth the envoy called Molhaṇa to negotiate peace, as a scam. Hammīra is given two alternative conditions for peace. If he wants to enjoy his kingdom he has to give away one *lakh* (hundred thousand) gold coins, four excellent elephants, three hundred horses and sheep, and his daughter (11.60). If he rejects this option, he can hand over the four Mongols "who have violated our [i.e. Ullugh Khan's] command" (*'smad-ājñā-pravilopino*). If he accepts one of these conditions he can further play with playful Royal Fortune (*krīḍīkṛtāṃ krīḍaya rājya-lakṣmīm,* 11.61). As expected, Hammīra becomes enraged. He rejects both demands, proclaiming that he will respond to the first request with the blows of his sword. He then proclaims that he will never give

[78] See p. 35 in translation by Bhatnagar 1991. I elaborate on the likely influence of HMK on this poem in the conclusion of this dissertation.

up the protection of "his refugees, even though they might be hostile" (*dviṣām api syāc charaṇāgatānāṃ*, 11.67). Again, the latter is an important detail. It will resonate later in Hammīra's delusional assessment about the inherent otherness and hostility of the Mongols.

Here, however, all of this doesn't really matter. His whole heroic rejection, in fact, doesn't matter. It reveals his blindness, his failure to see through the actual intent of Ulugh Khan's message. In HMK, Hammīra's famous and heroic response *is* the sign that he falls into the trap. Like elsewhere, Nayacandra exploits the tragic irony of the episode. Hammīra makes fun of the envoy's request to give up his protegees, rhetorically asking whether Alauddin's generals Ulugh Khan and Nusrat Khan "are indeed not the crest of the stupid-minded for asking me to hand over the Mongols" (*tad mudgalān no nanu yācamānau na kiṃ tvad-īśau jaḍa-dhi-vataṃsau*, 11.67). The attentive reader of course realizes that it is Hammīra himself who is the blind fool mistaking Ulugh Khan's deceitful maneuver for a sincere offer of truce. This interesting prelude to Hammīra's vow thus further undermines Hammīra's heroic character. In short, Hammīra's altruistic vow to protect the Mongols is purposefully postponed to this point in the narrative, where it loses its traditional double significance as the casus belli and the heroic core of his legend.

In Nayacandra's poem it looks like the story of Dharmasiṃha and Bhoja in canto nine and ten is meant to overshadow the significance of Hammīra's vow to protect Mahimāsāhi and the other Mongols. Interestingly, Hammīra will later suspect them of becoming traitors, potential enemies because of their innate 'otherness' – Hammīra's last fatal error.[79] The story of Hammīra's mistreatment of Dharmasiṃha and Bhoja is given much more volume and psychological depth. We learn about their motivations and thoughts, how they become the victim of a madly deluded king. The story in these two cantos – impossible to forget as made explicit in Bhoja's lament (10.74) - radically complicates the traditional story line about the *sattvic* Hammīra and his heroic vow to protect his Mongol refugees at all costs. Moreover, one of the wry ironies implicit in Nayacandra's version of Hammīra's tale might be something like this: Hammīra cannot take care of his own subjects – as Bhojadeva makes explicit -, how then could he secure the protection of the refugee Mongols and their family? It is worthwhile to compare this with the fifteenth-century Sanskrit play *Gaṅgadāsapratāpavilāsa,* which, I would argue, is purposely modeled on the Hammīra narrative just like *Kānhaḍade-prabandha* (1455). In a recent study of the play Aparna Kapadia observes that it hints at a similar sense of tragic futility of the whole

[79] Important to note is that the traditional emphasis on Hammīra's vow to the Mongol Mahimāsāhi as the *indirect* cause of his downfall does remain intact, including the point about Mahimāsāhi's new loyalty to Hammīra. But not in its traditional form as a vow to protect Mahimāsāhi and his family. See my discussion of the plot in the previous chapter.

war, precisely because the Chauhan hero Gaṅgadāsa failed to offer protection to his refugees.[80]

This section has argued that the opening cantos about Hammīra's rule - canto nine and ten, narrating the story of Hammīra's mistreatment of the wise duo Dharmasiṃha-Bhoja and his blind support for the virile duo Bhīmasiṃha-Ratipāla - not only undermine the rather positive remembrance of Hammīra at the time, but interestingly build up to the subsequent *reversal* of the traditional heroic core. Hammīra's minister-turned-refugee Bhojadeva almost literally takes the place of the refugee Mongol Mahimāsāhi in the traditional story line. Put differently, Nayacandra purposefully postpones the traditional heroic core to the eleventh canto, preceding it with two cantos that radically undermine the portrayal of Hammīra as a selfless, admirable hero. And when we finally learn about Hammīra's vow of protection it is framed in such a way that it loses its traditional significance as an act of heroism. Ulugh Khan cleverly tricked Hammīra to win time. Ironically, in Nayacandra's version of Hammīra's story, the Chauhan king's tendency to mistake friend for foe turns him into what he tries to prevent throughout the poem: to become remembered as inane (*dur-mati,* 13.101) and become a great object of ridicule (*mahad bhāvi viḍambanam,* 13.142).

[80] Gaṅgadhara's work is discussed at length in the third chapter of Aparna Kapadia's *In Praise of Kings* (2018). The play narrates the events about the mid-fifteenth century ruler Gaṅgadāsa of Champaner (in northeastern Gujarat) and his struggle with the Sultan of Ahmedabad. In this text, just like in the Hammīra story, the conflict between regional ruler and Sultanate power (though set in fifteenth century Gujarat) revolves around two problems: the hero's refusal to give his daughter to the Sultan and thus establish an alliance, *and* his refusal to hand over several enemies of the Sultan whom he had vowed to protect. Like in the Hammīra legend, the hero's stubborn refusal to hand these refugees over is presented as the *casus belli.* Interestingly, the play seems to highlight the hero's failure to actually protect these men, and not live up to the example for which the Chauhan clan is known. Kapadia notes (p.91) that the play thus seems to create a "sense of futility around the enmity between the Sultan and Gangadas", a tension which the poet seems to resolve by suddenly shifting focus. Yet, Kapadia discusses these works predominantly as idealizing narratives 'in praise of kings', just like texts like HMK and *Kānhaḍade-prabandha* tend to be read in modern times. I would argue that like *Kānhaḍade-prabandha* and Jayasī's *Padmāvat*, Gaṅgadhara's play can be said to refashion the (hi)story of the main hero along the lines of Hammīra's story. Aditya Behl (2012: 206, emphasis added) has already observed how in *Padmāvat* several episodes are "*taken directly* from the Rajput poetic accounts of the siege of Ranthambhor as exemplified in texts such as Nayacandra suri's *Hammīra mahākāvya.*" This observation may apply to several other works, like *Kānhaḍade-prabandha* and *Gaṅgadāsapratāpavilāsa.*

5.5 Making Sāraṅga lose his 'color' (*raṅga*): poetry/history as competition

This section picks up where we left off in the beginning of this chapter, with the context of the literary challenge at the Tomar court. The epilogue of Nayacandra's HMK breaths the atmosphere of courtly contest and competition. We get the impression that our author intended to challenge his audience, on different levels, with his new Hammīra poem. The first part of this canto can be read as a reflection on the emergence of the Hammīra tradition itself (14.1-14.21), from which his own poem ultimately stands out as presenting a radically novel, more encompassing, and distanced vision of the Chauhan hero's tragedy. In the second part (14.22-46) our poet places himself, and his poem, within a long history of Sanskrit poetry (and criticism). We could perhaps take the fourteenth and last canto of Nayacandra's poem as one long expression of the poet's concern to 'break' or play with tradition, both in terms of his daring treatment of the traditional Hammīra legend, as in terms of his departure from long-established literary conventions about 'happy endings' in Sanskrit poetry (*kāvya*).[81]

Nayacandra is clearly out to both emulate the poets of old and bend genre conventions to do something new and challenging. Nayacandra playfully pretends that it was a 'play of rashness' (*cāpala-keli*) that moved him to take up the near-impossible challenge of composing a Sanskrit epic like the poets of old. I indicated that it is meant as intertextual play, a nod to Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa,* just like when in the prologue he states that it was out of "utmost delusion" (*ati-mohād,* 1.11) that he began his attempt to narrate the life story of one of the greatest historical heroes and dynasties. The point here is that we have to look behind the surface meaning of such verses. He adopts and creatively alters Kālidāsa's expression of self-ridicule to prove his point, that his new poem is an innovative experiment, which almost literally plays a game (*keli*) with tradition. This too, however, is also fully in accordance with the tradition of *kāvya* itself. But still, Nayacandra did something new and challenging. Arguably his literary experiment can be understood as follows: Nayacandra adopts and adapts a theme from an emerging vernacular literary tradition – a popular story about a *tragic-historical hero* – and renders it into the format of a Sanskrit *mahākāvya*, a genre which nominally 'forbids' the telling of a tale resulting in

[81] It can be useful to not see the two parts as really separate from each other, as it is deceivingly presented in Jinavijaya's edition of 1993 [1968] where the first part is preceded by a headline "Praise of Hammīra's qualities" (*hammīra-guṇa-stutiḥ*) and the second part by the headline "praise of the author" (*kāvya-kartuḥ praśasti*). The poet itself takes it as one canto, titled "description of the poet's declaration" (*kavi-vākya-varṇaṇo*). It is worthwhile therefore to take the final canto as a whole. The edition of Kirtane (1879) doesn't insert this division.

the destruction of the protagonist and the victory of the antagonist. This partly explains many of the recurring and striking dissonances between the poem's format – and intertextual model – and the actual content. Moreover, the great historical distance between Nayacandra and earlier poets like Kālidāsa, allows him to outdo the 'poets of old' in the competition of intertextual depth.[82]

But what is new and challenging about Nayacandra's rendition of Hammīra's story itself? This is a difficult question because HMK is the earliest extant full-fledged epic rendering of the Hammīra tale. Nevertheless, I have tried to show that it is not that hard to detect challenging twists, or elements that may be unique to Nayacandra's version. Apart from making themselves felt, several striking episodes or playful inversions can be surmised through comparison with texts and fragments that do exist, both before and after the composition of Nayacandra's poem. I also discussed in the first chapter how Nayacandra introduces the topic of his poem in the form of an ambiguous question (in verse 1.9) about the supposed exemplarity of *sattvic* Hammīra, as a model of kingship in the degenerate present time, the *kaliyuga.* I drew attention to how Nayacandra puts the alleged exemplarity of Hammīra in the mouth of tradition, emphasized by the conspicuous use of the little, but significant word *kila* "so we are told". In short, I tried to show how Nayacandra presents Hammīra's praiseworthy character as a debatable point, in the *guise* of a traditional eulogistic biography (*carita*) to which HMK has a somewhat parodic relationship.

This ambiguity is quite fit for a poem that is presented as the result of a literary challenge to make a new Hammīra poem. HMK can be understood as a playful engagement with what he calls in the first verse of the final canto a "tradition of poems" (*kāvya-paramparāṃ,* 14.1) about the exceptional greatness of Hammīra which filled up the entire world, both during, and especially after his death. When read from beginning to end, it becomes very apparent that Nayacandra's new poem on Hammīra challenges or questions 'the traditional' (*kila*) remembrance of Hammīra as the epitome of the heroic altruism and courageousness, all the positive and luminous qualities associated with the ideal of *sattva* "goodness", which this Chauhan king supposedly embodied.

It is crucial to understand that Nayacandra's new rendering of Hammīra's story is sandwiched between two meta-poetic statements about how the stories *from others* reached his ears. Indeed, the final fourteenth canto picks up the ambiguous framing of the prologue. The first part appears to subtly and ironically reveal what this tradition of poems said about Hammīra (14.1-14.21). I will try to demonstrate this point in the next section. The second part (14.22-14.46) similarly throws back at the prologue. So when Nayacandra states in the prologue that in composing Hammīra's biography (*carita,* 1.10)

[82] In the conclusion to this dissertation I elaborate on this point, which is inspired by the important article of Bronner and Shulman (2006) on Sanskrit poetry in the 'vernacular millenium'.

he was only "allegedly impelled" (*nunnaḥ kila*) by the great weight attributed to all his qualities "after they had penetrated deeply into the root of his ear", in his epilogue he says that he was (actually?) impelled (*nunnaḥ,* without *kila*) to compose a poem about Hammīra's life story because the (Chauhan) king himself had urged him to do so in a dream (14.26). The poem comes full circle.

Of course, the poet's dream-vision - which we perhaps also shouldn't take too seriously - doesn't cancel out the idea that stories from other poets inspired Nayacandra to also write a poem about Hammīra. Without doubt stories about 'this and that' quality of Hammīra must have reached his ears. That seems to be the whole point of his framing. But we get the impression that *such stories impelled him to write a different story*, a new, alternative version of Hammīra that would compete with more conventional or popular accounts. The mention of his dream-vision, which points to uniqueness, underscores Nayacandra's subsequent claim that he made *a new poem* about this king (14.43). His poetic vision is different, perhaps radically so, from the traditional *(kila*) stories about Hammīra. Moreover, his vision is given the authority of king Hammīra himself, who appeared to him in a dream, and nudged him – we might assume – to tell the true, or a truer story about the events leading to his defeat.

It is not unlikely that Nayacandra's new poem of Hammīra was conceived, in part, as a response to specific poets or versions of the Hammīra tale. Perhaps he is 'targeting' the poets of Hammīra-verses as those that have been preserved in the *Śārṅgadhara-paddhati* (c. 1363), the well-known Sanskrit anthology of the eponymous poet Śārṅgadhara.[83] Not only does this anthology include several verses in praise of Hammīra and his Chauhan predecessors, in the opening verses the compiler Śārṅgadhara himself proudly makes explicit his own ancestral connection to the court of Hammīra Chauhan. He thus starts his prologue by lauding king Hammīra of the Chauhan lineage (*cāhuvāṇânvaye*), "whose valor was like Arjuna" (*śaurya ivârjunaḥ,* 1.2). He goes on to say that in Hammīra's assembly his grandfather Rāghavadeva served as the most respected guru (1.3).[84]

It might be possible that Nayacandra's poem is in fact responding to Śārṅgadhara himself, the compiler of this famous Sanskrit anthology. He was, after all, an older

[83] ed. by Peterson 1915.

[84] Verses are taken from edition by Peterson 1915: 1. Dvivedi (1973: 34) states that these verses are in *deśya-bhāṣā*, vernacular speech, probably uncritically adopting the view that Śārṅgadhara was the author of the anonymous vernacular verses in *Prākṛtapiṅgalam,* as noted earlier. The verses on the Chauhans which I identified in Peterson's edition (1915) are in Sanskrit: 1254 on Pṛthvīrāja (by Vināyakapaṇḍita), 1255-6 on Vigraharāja (from a *praśasti*; referred to as Vīsaladeva in 1255), 1257 on Hammīra's horses in battle (anonymous), 4004 on Hammīra's death, by the poet Deveśvara, listed in the "tragic mood" (*karuṇā rasa*) section. Worthy of attention is the use of the more vernacular *cāhuvāṇā* for the clan name instead of the Sanskrit *cāhamāna*, used throughout HMK and earlier Sanskrit *kāvya*s on the Chauhans like Jayānaka's *Pṛthvīrājavijaya* (c. 1192-3).

contemporary of Nayacandra. H.H. Dvivedi, the acclaimed historian of Gwalior, argued that Śārṅgadhara is in fact mentioned in HMK. At the end of his poem Nayacandra thus explains that his own guru Jayasiṃha Sūri defeated the famous poet Sāraṅga in a dispute, playing on his name, stating that Jayasiṃha made Sāraṅga *vi-raṅga* or without *raṅga* "color" or a "stage" (14.23). Dvivedi surmised that Sāraṅga may be taken as an abbreviation of Śārṅgadhara, based on a reference in a Sanskrit treatise on medicine, which is interestingly attributed to the founder of the Tomar lineage of Gwalior: Vīrasiṃha Tomar. The colophon of *Vīrasiṃhâvaloka* – thus named after the Tomar king himself - mentions that the king ordered "the wise *Sāraṅgadhiri*" to write a copy.[85] Dvivedi thus argues that Śārṅgadhara must have been associated with the court of the Tomar king Vīrasiṃha, suggesting that the family of Śārṅgadhara might have migrated to the Gwalior region after the fall of Ranthambor, bringing along with them their literary tradition and stories about Hammīra.[86]

Even if Dvivedi's hypothesis is not true – although I think it is plausible -, it remains reasonable to assume that the Tomar court must have been visited by poets, bards or storytellers who like Śārṅgadhara included the Hammīra legend in their repertoire. It is worth mentioning that his anthology even lists a verse attributed to Hammīra himself (3974), a heroic utterance he supposedly proclaimed before rushing into his death. The fact that the *paddhati* includes such a verse may reinforce Śārṅgadhara's introductory claim about the strong affinity between his ancestors and Hammīra. His family even managed to record what the great Hammīra proclaimed on the battlefield, his last wish to not become remembered as a coward who turned his back to run away. [87]

The point I want to emphasize is that the playful framing of Nayacandra's new poem of Hammīra only makes sense if HMK is indeed actually responding to more popular, overtly heroic versions of the Hammīra legend, which were widely circulating in the region. For example, a verse in Śārṅgadhara's anthology (4004, in the 'tragic' *karuṇā*-rasa section) from the poet Deveśvara lamenting the deplorable state of the earth now that Hammīra went to heaven is strikingly similar to the lamentations following Nayacandra's point about the emergence of a tradition of poetry (14.2-14.14). However, in HMK, the

[85]Dvivedi: 1973: 32-3.

[86] Ibid.

[87] vayasyāḥ kroṣṭāraḥ pratiśruṇuta baddhôñjalir ayaṃ
kim apy ākāṅkṣāmaḥ kṣarati na yathā vīra-caritam |
mṛtānām asmākaṃ bhavati para-vaśyaṃ vapur idaṃ
bhavadbhiḥ kartavyaṃ nahi nahi parācīna-caraṇam ||24||

Dear jackals! Please promise me this! I fold my hands in respect.
We request only this so that our heroic deeds do not waste away.
When we die, this body is in the power of others.
So please, may you not turn our feet in the opposite direction!

lamentations about the demise of the greatest ruler from the kaliyuga *come across as ironic quotations from this tradition*, because of the clear dissonance with the actualized representation of Hammīra's kingship in HMK itself.

5.6 Nayacandra's dream vision: irony and meta-history in HMK's final canto

So far, I left out a more thorough consideration of the poem's final canto. I didn't include it in my analysis of the poem's tragic plot in the previous chapter. This is because there's something odd about its relation to Nayacandra's version of Hammīra's story.[88] I believe the first part of the final canto of Nayacandra's HMK is typically misread as an expression of the poet's *own* lamentation over the death of Hammīra: a final praise of Hammīra's extraordinary qualities, but in the form of a lament, followed by the poet's own autobiographical remarks, and some theoretical considerations of poetry. I want to suggest, instead, that it can be read as the culmination of the meta-poetic message that runs throughout the poem: we have to look beyond the guise of (biographical) praise poetry.

As the poem's meta-poetic finale, it has an extra level of meta-ness around it. It not only implicitly shows how Nayacandra's poem reads as a new, subversive history of Hammīra, but also as a story about the emergence of tragic-historical poetry itself, arising out of the historic events leading to his death. Nayacandra's poem is of course part of this tradition. But it stands out from it through its more distant, all-encompassing 'epic' perspective. Nayacandra's zoomed-out vision on Hammīra's story, which he purposefully places within a greater tragic story about the downfall of the Chauhan dynasty, also leads him to ironically reflect on or represent what *others* made of Hammīra' story. He might be subtly presenting his *new* poem of Hammīra as being on top of other, more short-sighted and conflicting versions spread by "learned men" (*budhāś,* 14.1).

Importantly, directly after presenting *their* lamentations, between verse 14.1 and 14.21, we learn about how other "learned men" (*budha-jana,* 14.22) sing the fame of Nayacandra's Jain sect, called the *Kṛṣṇa-gaccha* in which many wise men bloomed. Then comes the verse, referred to in the previous section, about Nayacandra's guru Jayasiṃha

[88] I'm not the first to note that there is something odd about the 'perspective' in these verses. In the Hindi introduction to Jinavijaya's edition (1993 [1968]: 42-3) it is also observed that there is a switch in perspective in 14.15, which indicates that the preceding verses could be understood as "one poet says this", "another poet says that".

Sūri who took away the "color" (*raṅga*) of the famous poet Sāraṅga - perhaps the anthologist Śārṅgadhara, who took pride in his link with Hammīra's court - in a courtly debate (14.22). Nayacandra then further praises Jayasiṃha's brilliant intellectual achievements, as well as those of his direct predecessor, the Mighty (*prabhuḥ*) Prasannacandra (14.25), the Light in debates (*vādi-bheda-prabhaḥ*), to whose lotus feet even the great kings cling, like bumble bees. Nayacandra then introduces himself as the current spiritual leader (*sūri*) heading his lineage or religious seat (*paṭṭa*). It is then that we learn that king (Hammīra) himself had nudged Nayacandra in his dream to tell (or retell) his life story (14.26).

> Glory to the brilliant Nayacandra
> the Moon of Sūris who is like a Sun,
> his rays flickering fiercely for the lotus of his lineage,
> endowed with the essence of all knowledge,
> the moon who shines forth on the ocean of poets.
> By him this poem was made, willingly,
> nudged in a dream by that very king into displaying his deeds.
> And as to gratify the delight of many kings,
> it is to be enjoyed by the catchword 'hero'.[89]

This is one of those verses that sums up Nayacandra's whole poetic endeavor. As always, it works and sounds better in Sanskrit. Note how many of the central themes, imagery and paradoxes come together in this verse, with a strong meta-poetic overtone. Nayacandra, the brilliant (*śrī*) poet, whose name means something like the 'Moon of Wisdom', is not only like the shining moon to the ocean of poets, he is also like the flickering sun. With his fierce rays or verses - like in one of his *suprabhātam* (good morning) verses (13.146)- a poet may attempt to nudge or awaken sleepy (or sleepless) kings.[90] Interestingly, he uses one of his favorite images when saying that his rays are not only fierce, but also "very flickering" (*cañcattara*), the same word that can be used pejoratively to refer to Fortune's fickleness, or the unstable shakiness of his heroes.[91] With a playful irony, he says that the (dead) king himself has nudged (*nunna*) him in a dream to retell his life story. However, the reader knows that it is of course the poet himself who

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[89] tat-paṭṭâmbhoja-cañcattara-khara-kiraṇaḥ sarva-śāstrâika-binduḥ
sūrîndуḥ śrī-nayendur jayati kavi-kulôdanvad-ullāsanênduḥ |
tenâitenâiva rājñā sva-carita-tanane svapna-nunnena kāmaṃ
cakrāṇaṃ *kāvya*m etan nṛpati-tati-mude cāru vīrâṅka-ramyam ||14.26||

[90] See my discussion of the *suprabhātam* in the previous chapter, in the section "waking the sleepless", and my discussion of the *suprabhātam* verses in canto eight, in chapter three.

[91] As in 3.16 (cañcat) about Pṛthvīrāja, and 10.84 about the "fickle Vīrama and the other heroes" (*cañcalā vīramādyā vīrāḥ*), and 10.16 about Lakṣmī (*cañca-lākṣyāḥ*).

attempted to nudge the fickle and sleepy kings of his poem into waking. And now we hear that he did this with the approval of Hammīra himself. The whole poem indeed – which thus emerged from Nayacandra's dream - reads as a playful response to how other people (and poets) imagined Hammīra's life story.

This verse can be understood as a variation of a trend set by the foundational historical poems of Bāṇa and Bilhaṇa, who both explain or imply in their poems - Bāṇa at the beginning, Bilhaṇa at the end - how they ended up in the position of composing a biographical epic about their patron.[92] One could argue that Nayacandra's statement about his dream, as a playful variation of this practice and the motif of 'divine inspiration', is meant to show that he was *not* instructed by any living ruler to compose a biographical epic. He was nudged by the 'dead' Hammīra himself in a dream to retell his life story. And he composed his poem with pleasure (*kāmam*), of his own will. And in order to please kings, he chose to end each canto with a verse in which the word 'hero' (*vīra*) occurs, the mark or catchword (*aṅka*) of his poem (just like *śrī* is the catchword in Śrīharṣa's *Naiṣadhīyacarita*). Perhaps it is even meant to please his patron, Vīrama, whose name means 'hero'.[93] Importantly, however, the 'heroic' is never granted fulsome praise in his poem. This often becomes evident in the concluding verses themselves, as for example when Nayacandra concluded the radically subversive ninth canto by having Hammīra 'suitably' (*yuktyā*) replace the wise Bhojadeva by the would-be-traitor *Ratipāla-vīra,* the hero called "Protector of (Sexual) Pleasure" (9.188).

The point worth emphasizing is that this verse about Nayacandra's dream can be said to conclude the lamentations about Hammīra's death (14.1-14.21), which he cleverly put in the mouth of other 'wise men', to which I turn now. The following verse thus comes immediately after Hammīra cut off his own head in the final verse of the thirteenth canto.

> Then, when some heard about the elevated status of such a ruler
> - that true master of initiating fear in the enemy,
> that king Hammīra - pervading the whole world,
> and *still more* when yet others heard about his death
> these learned men created a tradition of poems,
> while swallowing up their misery in one gulp.[94]

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[92] See Herman Tieken (2014: 274-5) on this point, who suggests (p.247) that Bāṇa's *Harṣacarita* "is basically about storytelling, or rather about a poet relating a king's adventures." I discussed Nayacandra's somewhat parodic engagement with these poems earlier in chapter one and three.

[93] Eva de Clercq pointed out to me that this may fit into the tradition of *nāmāṅkan,* "name-marking", in which the author's name or patron's name is put in the last verse of each canto, which is not uncommon in Jain literature.

[94] tādṛkṣasya vibhor atha pratibhaṭa-trāsaika-dīkṣā-guror
hammīrāvanivāsavasya jagatī-lokaṃ-pṛṇa-pronnatiṃ|

This verse might seduce the reader into imagining Hammīra's death not as the end of the story, but as the *beginning* of his legend. The final canto takes the reader gradually back to the present, and indeed also back to the beginning of Nayacandra's poem, where it was said in verse 1.10 that he too was 'allegedly' nudged (*kila nunnaḥ*) to compose his poem about Hammīra, after the 'heaviness' of this and that quality plunged into the root of his ear (*karṇa-jāham,* 1.10). Now we learn how or when this happened or started, namely when some learned men first *heard* (*śrutvā*) about Hammīra's greatness, and *still more* (*sutarām*) indeed, when his death *reached their ears* (*ākarṇya*). This opening verse thus deliberately echoes the quotative nature of the prologue. It is crucial to understand that the laments that will follow are thus not presented as the poet's own vision, but produced by "learned men" (*budhāś*) who composed poetry about Hammīra during his life, and especially when they *heard* about his death.

It is here that the poem is about to become full circle. We are back at the beginning, confronted again with how the people in Nayacandra's time remember Hammīra for his exceptionally good and luminous character (*sattva,* 1.9), that Hammīra was the only praiseworthy king of the *kaliyuga* (1.8). The story of his 'great rise' (*pronnati*) pervades, or literally "fills up" the whole world.

Like in the prologue, the epilogue again foregrounds the "one and only" *eka*-perspective. The idea about Hammīra's unparalleled excelllence is present in all the subsequent verses. These learned poets repeatedly emphasize that Hammīra is the *only one* (*eka*) who stands out from the kings of the present age, "the dreadful *kaliyuga*" (*kāle karāle kalau,* 14.4). The recurrent idea is that with Hammīra's death, the earth is in a terrible condition, when of him "nothing but fame remained" (*yaśaḥ-śeśatām*, 14.4), when this hero, the one and only, chose heaven (*ekasmiṃs tvayi vīr nākam avite*). The whole earth mourns (*śocanty*) for Hammīra, the one and only (*ekam*) lord of the three worlds (14.5), and so on.

Despite the hyperbolic nature of these verses, there is something 'true' about Hammīra's uniqueness. Hammīra really came to symbolize something unique or unparalleled at the time. He became the embodiment of the (dubious) ideal of heroic resistance against Sultanate rule. He may indeed have been the first Rajput *warrior-king*. Many texts present him as an icon of warriorhood. He became part of a quasi-canonical 'set' of celebrated historical heroes, just like Bhoja of Dhar came to exemplify the ideal of the learned *poet-king* and patron. In the conclusion I hope to elaborate on the significance of Hammīra's iconic and celebratory status for our understanding of the development of the Rajput tale (of which HMK is arguably the first example). The point of importance

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śrutvā kecana kecanāpi sutarām ākarṇya mṛtyuṃ budhāś
cakruḥ *kāvya*-paramparām iti tadā kaṣṭaikamuṣṭiṃdhayāḥ ||14.1||

here is that *in Nayacandra's poem* Hammīra's exceptional warriorhood is just one part of the 'truth' about his tragic story. There is thus a deafening silence in these lamentations about what really happened during Hammīra's reign, as recounted in Nayacandra's version of Hammīra's history. We get the impression that these 'learned men' when they heard about his death, not only swallowed up their grief or misery (*kaṣṭa*) in one gulp (*eka-muṣṭi*) to compose poetry, but perhaps also removed the misery or trouble inflicted *by* a king like Hammīra.[95]

Let me give a glimpse of the inflated rhetoric of these verses. It is difficult not to hear the stark dissonance with Nayacandra's not so ideal presentation of Hammīra's kingship. Consider for example the first two verses:

> Oh illustrious King Hammīra, head ornament of kings, now that you went to heaven
> Dharma abandoned its abode of prosperity,[96] Compassion went to the forest for shelter,
> Generosity drained off, the Vow of Heroism resorted to childish play, Leadership (*nīti*) approached fearfulness (*bhītim*), and Fortune took the seal of widowhood.[97]
>
> Ah! Who will now worship the gods on earth – the brahmins - with piles of gold?
> Or who indeed will pay attention to each of the six religious-philosophical traditions (*darśana*)?
> Or who will watch over the cow-shed, being destroyed by the Śaka clans with anger?
> Ah! Without you, pure-minded Hammīra, what happens to our destiny?[98]

Even though these verses are nominally put in the mouth of others, and the imagery is clearly formulaic, Nayacandra does seem to occasionally leave behind his playful touch. What to make of the idea that no one is left to 'worship the Brahmins with piles of gold'? Hammīra indeed made them dance on piles (or tricks) (*kūṭeṣu*) of gold in order to secure his ascent to heaven and become a 'vessel of pleasure' in heaven. Other themes too resonate in these laments. Consider also for example the important topic of fate, as it appears in verse 14.7:

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[95] I believe the compound *kaṣṭâika-muṣtim-dhayāḥ* allows for this ambiguity.

[96] Or the 'foot' (pada) of prosperity. Dharma is often imagined as a bull or cow losing a foot with each transfer to the next time era. In the present dark age of Kali Dharma is believed to stand unsteadily on only one foot.

[97] dharmaḥ śarma-padaṃ mumoca karuṇâraṇyaṃ śaraṇyaṃ yayāv
audāryaṃ vijagāla bāla-lalitaṃ śiśrāya vīra-vratam|
nītir bhītim upājagāma kamalā vaidhavya-mudrāṃ dadhau
śrī-hammīra nṛpāla-bhāla-tilaka svargaṃ gate 'dya tvayi ||14.2||

[98] bhūdevān idamādi kāñcana-cayaiḥ kaḥ pūjayiṣyaty aho
ko vā nāma kariṣyati prati-padaṃ ṣaḍ-darśanôpāsanām|
ko vā pāsyati gokulaṃ śaka-kulair āhanyamānaṃ ruṣâ-
smākaṃ kā gatir astu nistuṣa-mate hammīra hā tvāṃ vinā ||14.3||

What can we do? What can we say? And to which king can we adhere?
How can we explain our unequaled suffering? Or to whom should we speak?
Because when Fate (*vidhi*), that causeless horror, took away Hammīra,
who was the only source of such qualities, he at once seized everyhing indeed on this earth, alas![99]

This imagery of Fate's capriciousness resonates with earlier episodes in the poem. We know from the story of Jaitrasiṃha's death that blaming the *apparent* causelessness of Fate is linked to the problem of sorrow, which creates a delusion that grasps the Self (*moha-grahilī-kṛtâtmā*, 8.117). In the final canto the reader too is invited to understand this as the short-sighed perspective of those 'learned men'. It is the delusion accompanying intense grief (over the ones we love and admire) that makes people utter such verses, and resort to blaming fate as the capricious Creator or Disposer (*vidhi* in 14.7 and *dhātṛ* in 14.13). But, let me repeat, it is difficult not to hear the dissonance with the actualized story of Hammīra's kingship. For example, Hammīra's half-brother Bhojadeva, a clear victim of Hammīra's not so ideal kingship, uttered similar cries of desperation. Let me quote one verse from his lament again, where it may sound more serious or at least more appropriate:

So what can I do? To whom can I cling?
Where can I go? And what can I say?
This heart, now and then, resembles
a tuft of grass shaken by the wind.[100]

The audience must have recognized the imagery from these verses as formulaic, perhaps a bit worn-out, heard too much. And to imbue them with a new freshness, Nayacandra appears to make the imagery in the final canto sound even more 'over-the-top', inserting a humorous touch or light sting to it. Consider for example the following verses about Hammīra's 'unsteady activity' in heaven, while the earth appears to suffer from the absence of Hammīra's qualities on earth:

Immediately, Firmness resorted to mount Meru; Wisdom to Bṛhaspati;
Profundity to the ocean; Gentleness to the moon; the course of Power to the sun;

[99] kiṃ kurvīmahi kiṃ bruvīmahi vibhuṃ kaṃ cânurundhīmahi
vyācakṣīmahi kiṃ svaduḥkham asamaṃ kaṃ vā babhāṣemahi|
yan niṣkāraṇa-dāruṇena vidhinā tādṛg-guṇâikâkaraṃ
hammīraṃ haratâñjasā hṛtam aho sarvasvam evâvaneḥ ||14.7/||

[100] tat kiṃ karomi kaṃ vā śrayāmi yāmi kva vā kimu vadāmi |
hṛdayam vātândolita-tūla-tulāṃ kalayatîdam anuvelam ||10.76||

Bravery to Hari; Generosity to the wish-fulfilling gem; Beauty to Kāmadeva;
when Hammīra's eyes stumbled down the big mountain-breasts of the divine nymphs. [101]

Or consider the following verse, where Sarasvatī is said to be the only real victim of Hammīra's death:

Illustrious king Hammīra! Now that you have become the Wish-fulfilling stone
of the skill in decorating the breasts of Indra's wife
Fortune will quickly go to the chest-surface of the god Viṣṇu,
and the hero's Splendor to the abode of heroes, and all those arts to Hari.
But alas! Alas! Sarasvatī will be without support.[102]

The verse makes powerfully - but perhaps also humoristically - audible the painful wailing of 'Ah!' cries at the end of both verse lines (*tās tāḥ samastāḥ kalāḥ... nir-ādhārā ha hā bhāratī...*). To support my view about the clichéd nature of these lamentations, it is worth quoting the following verse from Merutuṅga's *Prabandhacintāmaṇi* (1305), whose stories were certainly known to Nayacandra. It is uttered by the Paramāra king Muñja, right before the moment of his death, after his haughtiness and over-confidence got him tricked into defeat.[103] Right before his execution by the king of Telaṅgana, he is allowed to utter some last words. He chooses to praise himself in the third person as such:[104]

Lakṣmī will go to Viṣṇu, and Splendor of the hero to the abode of heroes.
But with Muñja gone, that heap of fame (*yaśaḥ-puñja*), Sarasvatī is without support.[105]

These and many other speeches have to be understood as heard (from tradition) (*yathā-śrutam*).

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[101] dhairyaṃ meru-giriṃ matiḥ sura-guruṃ gambhīratā sāgaraṃ
saumyatvaṃ śaśinaṃ pratāpa-saraṇiḥ sūraṃ hariṃ śūratā |
cintā-ratnam udāratā subhagatā śiśrāya kāmaṃ kṣaṇād
hammīre surasundarī-stana-mahā-śaila-skhalac-cakṣuṣi ||14.6||

[102] lakṣmīr yāsyati satvaraṃ mura-ripor devasya vakṣaḥ-sthale
vīra-śrīr api vīra-veśmani hares tās tāḥ samastāḥ kalāḥ|
paulomī-kuca-kumbha-patra-racanā-cāturya-cintāmaṇau
śrī-hammīra nareśvara tvayi nir-ādhārā ha hā bhāratī ||14.8||

[103] The overall narrative template is very similar to what happens in HMK. Muñja is said to have blinded his brother Sindhurāja (the father of the famous king-poet Bhoja), eventhough cautioned to remain on good terms with him. Later, refusing to listen to his wise minister, he rushes into war with the king of the Tiliṅga country. Like the gist of Pṛthvīrāja's story in both the *prabandhas* and Nayacandra's HMK, the *prabandha* of Muñja too exploits the tragic irony of over-confidence in physical strenght, see the translation by Tawney 1901: 32-4. The translation above is my own.

[104] The passage seems to implictly hint at the taboo of self-praise.

[105] lakṣmīr yāsyati govinde vīra-śrīr vīra-veśmani | gate muñje yaśaḥ-puñje nir-ālambā sarasvatī || ity ādi tadvākyāni bahūni yathā-śrutam avagantavyāni | Sanskrit quoted from Jinavijaya 1936: 25.

Like the *prabandha* author Merutuṅga, Nayacandra is also framing his verses as heard from tradition. But he does it differently, somewhat humorously mimicking the style and tone of such laments. The hyperbolic tone culminates to the 'concluding' point that with Hammīra's death nothing is worth seeing or hearing anymore. This is may be the explanation why Sarasvatī is without support:

> Eyes, may you get scratched out, and Ears may you become extremely deaf!
> Alas! Henceforth for both of you nowhere even a small task will prance around!
> You have seen his multitude of qualities, or rather, you have heard them!
> Ah! Ah! Shouldn't you both feel ashamed to still hear and see something else?![106]

With Hammīra's death, there is no task left for the eyes and ears. Although the verse hyperbolically praises Hammīra, the imagery deliberately evokes the all-important theme of tragic blindness and deafness, pervading the poem at every level, together with a nod to the prancing horse-like senses. This is a call to attention. The audience is put to the test. Do we still remember *how Nayacandra* – and not these 'learned men' - told Hammīra's story? From the next verse onward, we are perhaps invited to lose the delusion, and again recognize all the preceding statements as what 'people say'.

> Let the people out of delusion prattle that the Chauhan king went to heaven,
> this illustrious Hammīra, the lord of men and only support of the world.
> Having reached just a little knowledge of the truth, we must say that he is
> alive indeed. For he is seen everywhere, with all those valorous deeds of him.[107]

Nayacandra presents yet another perspective, a reminder, perhaps, of the 'quotative' nature of the preceding verses. But it also takes the reader to the present. It reminds us of the fact that the stories about Hammīra are keeping him alive. We should not wail about his death and ascent to heaven, for he is still alive in our memories. He continues to live in the body of fame, that we – the poets and people - have created for him. Despite the change in perspective, the verse remains in the clichéd 'what people say' atmosphere.

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[106] netre niṣkaśatāṃ nitānta-badhirī-bhāvaṃ bhajetāṃ śrutī
no kāryaṃ yuvayor ataḥ param aho kiñcit kvacid valgati |
yābhyām eṣa samīkṣito guṇa-gaṇas tasyâthavā saṃśruto
lajjetām itaraṃ hahā kimu na[nu] śrotuṃ tathā vīkṣitum ||14.14||

[107] loko mūḍhatayā prajalpatutamāṃ yac cāhamānaḥ prabhuḥ
śrī-hammīra nareśvaraḥ svar agamad viśvâika-sādhāraṇaḥ |
tattva-jñatvam upetya kiñcana vayaṃ brūmastamāṃ sa kṣitau
jīvann eva vilokyate pratipadaṃ tais tair nijair vikramaiḥ ||14.15||

As noted in the Hindi preface to HMK's 1968 edition, the verse alludes to a verse about the 'ideal' Jain king Kumārapāla in the historical *kāvya* composed by Nayacandra's own guru, a poem of which Nayacandra made the first transcript more than four decades earlier, in 1365. This verse says that people have to lose their delusional prattle, because the king-seer (*rājarṣir*) Kumārapāla, this good man (*sukṛtī*) continues to be seen everywhere, in the heart (*svānte*) with his virtuous deeds or *by all those virtuous people* (*sac-caritair*).[108] Half a century later Nayacandra remodels this verse to 'praise' the protagonist of his poem. Or rather, he uses it to present yet another clichéd perspective, in which we are almost literally invited to consider its 'truth'. Perhaps, instead of taking *tair tair nijair vikramaiḥ* as "with all his valorous deeds", we could take it as the agent of the passive "is seen" (*vilokyate*). This would make the idea of the verse as follows: the truth is that Hammīra "is still seen everywhere by all those valorous men of his own (dynasty)". We could see it as a subtle comment on the way Hammīra was made into an icon of heroic valor (*vikrama*), precisely by members of his own (*nija*) Chauhan dynasty or those claiming descent from Hammīra or his clan.

Cynthia Talbot is probably right in her assessment that during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries various warrior linages claimed descent from Chauhan rulers like Pṛthvīrāja and Hammīra, and that the composition of a poem like HMK is reflective of this trend to form "a large and amorphous new social identity".[109] Importantly however, poems like HMK do not merely reflect such trends, nor do they just promote or celebrate the ideals and values held by those 'illustrious' warrior-kings. Let's recall that in Nayacandra's version of Hammīra's story the value of 'valorous or courageous strength' (*vikrama*) is not really praised, and that occasionally this becomes very explicit.

In the final verses Nayacandra continues to present popular perspectives, imbued with the poet's own ambiguous touches. He thus evokes the way in which the 'traditional cast' is remembered, and what appears to have happened after Hammīra's death: the warrior

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[108] Namely, verse 10.267, from Jayasiṃhasūri's *Kumārapālacarita*, referred to in the Hindi introduction, Jinavijaya: 1993 [1968]: 47.)

loko mūḍhatayā prajalpatu divaṃ rājarṣir adhyūṣivān
brūmo vijñatayā vayaṃ punar ihâivāste cirāyuṣkavat |
svānte sac-caritair nabho 'bdhi-manubhiḥ kailāsa-vaihāsikaiḥ
prāsādaiś ca bahir yad eṣa sukṛtī pratyakṣa evêkṣyate ||10.267||

May the people out of foolishness prattle that the king-seer is dwelling in heaven
Using our intellect, we can say that he still here in this world, enjoying a long life.
Because this good man is seen clearly seen, within the self, by good people, by the creatures in the oceans and in the clouds, and by the buffoons of Kailāsa outside their palaces.

[109] Talbot 2016: 68.

Jājā stayed two days in the fort to defend it, as it is said (*kila,* 14.16, and 14.18) [110], Mahimāsāhi was captured alive by Alauddin and again proved his extraordinary warriorhood and loyalty (14.19-20), and the Śaka king got rid of the traitor Ratipāla (14.21). In short, the well-known heroes Jājā and Mahimāsāhi deserve praise, while the two traitors Ratipāla and Raṇamalla deserve blame (14.16). And Hammīra himself, he continues to exemplify the quality of a selfless goodness.

But these final verses also contain traces of Nayacandra's typical ambivalent or critical stance toward the traditional perspective. What to make of the fact that Mahimāsāhi is described within the same verse (14.19) not only as exemplifying the "undisguised warrior's vow" (*nirvyāja-vīra-vrato*), but also as "the only abode of the ego" (*'haṅ-kārâika-niketanaṃ*)? Again, Nayacandra emphasizes the intimate link between the warrior and the pejorative term for pride, *ahaṅ-kāra*, the blinding 'I-maker'. It is worth having a closer look at the ambiguity in one verse where Nayacandra repeats the traditional gist of Hammīra's legend. The verse states that Hammīra's story by far transcends the traditional exemplars of self-sacrifice and generosity:

> Oh! Karṇa gave away his armour; Śibi his flesh; Bali the earth;
> Jīmūta half his body. But they are not equal to Hammīradeva!
> At once, because of that lofty refugee Mahimāsāhi
> he turned himself - together with his many children, wives and servants –
> into a story.[111]

It appears that unlike the traditional examples of generosity and self-sacrifice, the Chauhan king sacrificed *everything*, because of his refugee Mahimāsāhi. But it is not clear whether he actually gave up something, and to whom, and because of what exactly? What is it that makes Hammīra's story different from– not equal (*na samā*) – to legendary heroes like Karṇa, Śibi, Bali and Jīmūta?

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[110] Even though Nayacandra's story had little to stay about Jājā, verse 14.16 present him as the only one *(eko*) who should be praised in this world, for, *as they say*, (*kila*) he defended the kingdom for two days when the king went to heaven (14.16). Two verses later he is mentioned as Hammīra's supreme devotee (*svāmi-bhaktaḥ*). The verse again emphasizes that this is the Chauhan warrior who should be celebrated for a long time (*jayatu ciraṃ,* 14.18). Instead of leaving the besieged fort, he stayed behind to fight for Hammīra. The verse also humorously explains why tradition calls him Jājā "Go (away), go (away)" (Skt. *yāhi yāhi*), explaining that Jājā misunderstood Hammīra's command to go away. He took it as the grammatical rule that two negatives making an affirmative, and therefore Jājā stayed behind to fight for Hammīra, and became known as such "Go Go".

[111] rādheyaḥ kavacaṃ dadau śibir aho māṃsaṃ balir medinīṃ
jīmūto 'rdha-vapus tathā 'pi na samā hammīra-devena te |
yenôccaiḥ-śaraṇāgatasya mahimāsāher nimittaṃ kṣaṇā-
d ātmā putra-kalatra-bhṛtya-nivaho nītaḥ kathā-śeṣatām ||17||

There is something about the way the verse puts the comparison that makes the expected compliment not come out as praise. Unlike the traditional exemplars of generosity and self-sacrifice, the verse implies that Hammīra didn't really give away (*dadau*) anything, like Karṇa etc. who had all sacrificed something because of their (over)generosity. To put it boldly, it looks like *Hammīra made everyone die*: himself, his children, servants, and wives, *including* the people he promised protection. The verse literally says this. Because of the lofty refugee Mahimāsāhi, who is the cause (*nimittam*), Hammīra brought himself – and his whole family and servants - "into the condition of having (only) a story as remainder". This is a well-known euphemistic expression for dying, or killing if it is put in the causative, as here. Indeed, the verse literally says that by Hammīra all these people 'were turned into a story', namely they died because of him. Or he killed them. Nayacandra purposefully puts the gist of Hammīra's story in ambiguous terms.

It is instructive to contrast this with Vidyāpati's conclusion quoted earlier in this chapter. He makes it unambiguously clear that Hammīra sacrificed everything out of selfless compassion and *for the sake of protecting another*, which is what Vidyāpati's story is all about, as explained above. In Nayacandra's epic, by contrast, the traditional storyline about Hammīra's selfless vow *to protect* the Mongol Mahimāsāhi is radically altered, subverted, and not even central to the whole plot. It doesn't even form the casus belli – the *nimittam* - as it does in nearly all – if not all - Hammīra tales.[112] I believe Nayacandra's ambiguous treatment of Hammīra's heroism can be heard in the verse quoted above. It doesn't really praise Hammīra, but just says that he is not equal to heroes like Karṇa.

Apart from the ambiguity with which Nayacandra presents the 'tradition of poems' (*kāvya-paramparā*, 14.1) emerging after Hammīra's death, there is a striking silence in these 'concluding' lamentations about the characters that play a more significant role in Nayacandra's own version of the Hammīra story. For example, Dharmasiṃha and Bhoja, the wise ministers who turned against Hammīra to avenge the injustice inflicted upon them by their mad king. They are not praised or condemned in these final verses. We don't learn about their fates. Or Vīrama, Hammīra's 'younger brother' – or Nayacandra's patron? - who plays a much bigger role than Jājā in Nayacandra's poem. Although these characters occupy an important space in Nayacandra's poem, they are not mentioned

[112] In the previous chapter I showed how the fall of Ranthambhor is linked to Hammīra's delusional thoughts. He wrongly suspects Mahimāsāhi to commit treason, because he sees this foreigner as inherently 'low' and 'other'. It is also not out of compassion or heroic selflessness that he decides to send him away, but because he fears to become an object of ridicule (*viḍambanam*, 13.142) if they betray him. But Mahimāsāhi then shockingly reveals Hammīra's delusion by brutally slaying his own family, which indirectly causes the downfall of the kingdom.

here. It looks, indeed, that they are not part of the 'traditional cast and gist' of Hammīra's story.

In short, HMK appears to playfully respond to the way earlier or contemporary poets– and their audiences – may have narrowed down the essence of Hammīra's story to a tale of heroic self-sacrifice, about a king so valorous, selfless and fearless that he gave up everything for the sake of protecting another. The framing of Nayacandra's own poem, and indeed many of the ironies and twists in his poem, only make sense if our poet was indeed responding to more overtly heroic presentations of Hammīra elsewhere, or indeed to the emergence of a Hammīra tradition itself. This explains why the whole lamentation is framed between a statement about what 'learned men' *heard* and told in their tradition or series of poems (14.1) and what Nayacandra *saw* in his dream, told by Hammīra himself (14.26). Nayacandra's self-proclaimed new poem of Hammīra (14.43) was probably radically new in its treatment of the traditional story line.

5.7 Playing with memories: Hammīra 'the good' becomes 'sleepy' Pṛthvīrāja/Jayacandra

In the previous chapter I discussed how Nayacandra's epic ingeniously models various kinds of transformations, making it appear that many of the characters assimilate into Hammīra's own character. He thus as it were becomes the general Bhīmasiṃha 'Lion Bhīma' who rushed headlong into his death; he becomes the minister Dharmasiṃha 'Lion Dharma' whom he unjustly blinded and castrated; he becomes the traitor Ratipāla 'Protector of Sex' whom he appointed as his favorite warrior; he becomes the Mongol 'other' whom he wrongly suspected of treason, accusing him of low and hostile behavior; and eventually he becomes the fool Jāhaḍa whom he appointed as the scapegoat for the destruction of his clan. In this section I want to extend this reading to the level of historical memory. I already briefly explained in the second chapter how Nayacandra purposefully seems to displace the critique associated with 'sleepy' Pṛthvīrāja to the story of the sattvic Hammīra. In this section I will further substantiate this point from a more contextualized angle by briefly discussing Nayacandra's engagement with a growing pool of stories about historical heroes at his time.

I will start this discussion by drawing attention to one more verse from the somewhat 'ironic' lamentations in the fourteenth canto. There is one verse that explicitly evokes the idea that all historical kings, eventually, end up making a fool of themselves. Of course, the verse – uttered by those 'wise men' - apparently suggests that Hammīra forms the exception to this rule:

King Vikrama wished to consume a crow; the cripple Jaitra(candra)
quickly drowned in the water; Malayasiṃha became a drum in front of his enemy.
In this way, how many have not turned into an object of ridicule? But, oh king Hammīra,
what *you* did...who in this age of Kali has done this, who does this, or who will do this?[113]

In this verse Nayacandra is reminding the audience of the many popular stories about other kings from the *kaliyuga,* as those preserved in the *prabandha* collections of the Jains. King Vikrama must be meant as a nod to the famous cycle of stories about Vikramāditya, although I didn't manage to locate a story about him consuming a crow (- perhaps a nod to the *Pañcatantra* story of the owls and the crow?). "That cripple Jaitra" (*paṅguḥ sa jaitro*) is clearly meant to refer to the famous Gāhaḍavala ruler Jaitracandra, more popularly known as Jaicand/Jayacandra of Kannauj, the rival of Hammīra's predecessor Pṛthvīrāja, whose court was also associated with the famous poet Śrīharṣa, as the *prabandha* texts show. In Merutuṅga's *Prabandhacintāmaṇi* we find the story of how Jayacandra escaped the battlefield as a coward and drowned himself in the Ganges, which is alluded to here. In this text he is similarly referred to as 'the cripple', just like in Nayacandra's own intriguing play *Rambhāmañjarī.*[114] King Malayasiṃha might refer to a Candella ruler by that name, although I didn't manage to retrieve the story to which Nayacandra hints in this verse.[115] Worthy of note is that king Vikrama – the Valorous – was clearly imagined as an ideal and role-model at the time, the founder of the Vikrama era.[116] This verse praises Hammīra by suggesting that ultimately all these historical heroes - even a heroic model like Vikrama – ended up making a fool of themselves (*viḍambayanti*). But supposedly, 'what Hammīra did', was different. At least this is what these 'learned men' from verse 14.1 said. But why was he so different? What did he actually do?

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[113] bhoktuṃ dhvāṅkṣam iyeṣa vikrama-vibhuḥ paṅguḥ sa jaitro jale
'majjad drāg malayâiṇarāḍ ripu-puro mārdaṅgikatvaṃ dadhau |
itthaṃ svaṃ sma viḍambayanti kati no hammīra rājan paraṃ
yat tvaṃ cakritha tac cakāra kurute karttâthavā kaḥ kalau ||14.11||

[114] Thus according to Merutuṅga's *Prabandhacintāmaṇi* (translation of Tawney 1901: 183-184) Jayacandra "bore the title of "the cripple," because he was so embarrassed with the multitude of his forces, that he could not march anywhere without resting on the two staves of the Yamunā and the Gaṅgā." Nayacandra's *Rambhāmañjarī* refers to the same anecdote, see Poddar 1976. 114.

[115] I thank Csaba Dezso for making me see that we can take *malayâiṇarāt* as the name Malayasiṃha, because of the "kenning" of lion ("king of deer"). Nayacandra may also just be inventing some king or other with the typical 'lion'-suffix. Whether he is a real historical king or not is not important for the point of this verse.

[116] See for example Arai's article (1978) on Jaina kingship in *Prabandhacintāmaṇi*, in which Kumārapāla is imagined as a second Vikramāditya, with whom Mertuṅga's story collection begins.

This verse purposefully contrasts Hammīra's legendary story with these other well-known heroes of the time. Importantly, Hammīra's portrayal in Nayacandra's poem is strikingly similar to the flawed kingship that was associated with rulers like Pṛthvīrāja and Jayacandra, the topic of his play *Rambhāmañjarī.* This play explicitly presents itself as the enactment of the *prabandha* of Jayacandra, and his legendary amorous exploits (linked to his defeat). Like HMK, the play is clearly only deceitfully framed as an homage to Jayacandra's unsurpassed greatness. Its plot, culminating in a long amorous and sleepless nights with his queens, clearly hints at Jayacandra's fatal confusion and sleepiness, resulting from his insatiable addiction to sexual pleasure. When the bards announce the morning with their *suprabhātam* 'good morning' verses, the king wakes up in confusion, shouting "Oh! It has become morning indeed!" (*aye jātam eva prabhātam*), complaining that from the night only unsatiety remains (*atṛpti-śeṣā*).[117]

The verse quoted above can be read as a reminder about HMK's engagement with an emerging literary tradition about famous, though foolish tragic-historical heroes like Pṛthvīrāja and Jayacandra, as evident from the *prabandha* literature, or from other collections like Vidyāpati's *Puruṣaparīkṣā,* which also includes Jayacandra's story as an illustration of a hero whose example is *not* to be followed.[118] The details and plots of the stories differ, showing that there must have been many different, competing versions, which offer various explanations regarding why and how they ended up dead. Every story, however, has something that makes it unique, which makes it possible, for example, to condense the stories of rulers like Pṛthvīrāja and Jayacandra to a single gist, based on a defining character trait or other elements. For Hammira this became his stubbornness (*haṭha*), a rather ambiguous heroic 'quality' which in HMK and later poems is precisely what caused him posthumous blame. The tragedy of Jayacandra is typically linked to his infatuation with one of his wives, who eventually betrays him. The stories about Pṛthvīrāja links his defeat to a tragic process set in motion by the Chauhan king's unjust treatment of his minister, while emphasizing his excessive sleepiness before the fatal encounter with Muhammad Ghori.[119] Yet, despite the slightly different gist in each

[117] 3.22 in edtion of Poddar 1976.

[118] Jayacandra's story is narrated in Merutuṅga's *Prabandhacintāmaṇi,* Jinabhadra's *Prabandhāvalī* and Rājaśekhara's *Prabandhakośa.* His story is also found in two stories of Vidyāpati's *Puruṣaparīkṣā.* Interestingly, Jayacandra is praised in the beginning of the story collection (in tale three) as the greatest ruler of the time, who was deemed invincible. However, he seems to retell his story at the end of his collection in tale 41, as part of the counter-example stories, where he is cast as "the infatuate man enslaved by women" (*strī-vaśyo ghasmara*). Similar to the *prabandhas*, Vidyāpati's version of Jayacandra juxtaposes the foolishness and cowardice of the king with the intelligence and bravery of his minister, Vidyādhara, the king of ministers, who emerges as the real hero of the story.

[119] See Talbot 2016: 50-6, for a recent discussion of these narratives as precursors to the *Pṛthvīrājarāso*. Pṛthvīrāja's story is only told at some length in Jinabhadra's and Merutuṅgas collection, but his defeat is also

story, there seems to be a general template, that also extends to the stories about other rulers in the prabandha collections. Typically, the kings are critiqued for neglecting their royal duties, their insatiable greed, over-confidence, obsession with glory, martial or sexual pleasure, and especially for their unwillingness to listen to or accept the advice of their ministers or poets, whom they insult, or worse, imprison or kill. In fact, many of the individual *prabandhas* of kings, seem actually more to revolve around the unfortunate fate of their poets or ministers, just like in HMK.

It is clear from both Indic and Persian texts that the tragic stories of Pṛthvīrāja and Jayacandra came to symbolize the start of a new era, the start of Sultanate rule, at least during the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. And despite later heroic transformations (like in the *Pṛthvīrājarāso*), they continued to be remembered as utterly foolish kings, whose examples were perhaps not really meant to evoke emulation.[120] In short, Pṛthvīrāja came to be associated, with an excessive sleepiness and violent attitude toward his ministers, and his rival Jayacandra with his pleasure-addiction and cowardice. The *prabandhas* reveal how probably sometime during the fifteenth century, and perhaps earlier, authors began to link and mix the stories of Jayacandra and Pṛthvīrāja, as a story about the conflict between two powerful, but utterly foolish and unsuccessful rulers, who both ended up losing against Shahabuddin.[121] The linking of both Jayacandra and

referred to in other collections, as in the *Vastupālaprabandha* in Rājaśekhara's *Prabandhakośa*. In Merutuṅga's account he cuts off the ears of his minister called Someśvara, because he wrongly thinks (*bhrāntyā,* Jinavijaya 1933: 117) he went over to the side of the enemy. Ironically, it is precisely this cruel conduct which makes his minister actually go over to the enemy, and take revenge. This is very similar to how Nayacandra models the story of Hammīra (but not that of Pṛthvīrāja!). The overall template is also similar to the story told in the story of Pṛthvīrāja preserved in the *Purātanaprabandhasaṅgraha* (tale 40), where Pṛthvīrāja's minister is called Kaimbāsa. He must have been an historical figure for he figures as the chief minister in Jayānaka's patron-centered epic *Pṛthvīrājavijaya.*

[120] The epic tradition of the *rāso* seems to literally grow out the many stories surrounding Pṛthvīrāja and Jayacandra as they are preserved in the prabandha literature. As Cynthia Talbot demonstrates in her book on Pṛthvīrāja (2016) they both came to embody the shared heroic past of various Rajput elites from the sixteenth century onwards. Talbot emphasizes that a shift toward a much more positive portrayal took place with the composition of *Pṛthvīrājarāso*, in which Pṛthvīrāja is presented as the epitome of Indian warriorhood (2016: 66-8). But this heroic transformation of Pṛthvīrāja and Jayacandra, which appears to take off around the fifteenth century, doesn't happen without losing their former status as kings who are entirely unfit for kingship, which in some episodes seems to be dramatically reinforced.

[121] Thus, the prabandha of Pṛthvīrāja, tale 40, is linked to the prabandha about Jayacandra, tale 41 from the *Prabandhāvali* (1234, but from a manuscript dated in 1470, ed. Jinavijaya 1936). In the prabandha of Jayacandra we learn that the king of Kannauj is overjoyed at the death of his enemy Pṛthvīrāja. He intends to expand his power and starts festivities. We learn that his wise minister does not partake in these celebrations, because he was reflecting on the death of Pṛthvīrāja and occupied with the kings' affairs. He confronts the king with his inappropriate joy, indicating that what happened to Pṛthvīrāja could happen to him too.

Pṛthvīrāja's tragic story becomes the main focus of the cycle of poems known as the *Pṛthvīrājarāso* (from the Mughal period), ascribed to the bard Cand, who is presented as the king's highly critical court poet, just like in the *prabandhas*. It is worth quoting how Pritchett summarizes the plot of *Pṛthvīrājarāso*:

> "From an arrogant, powerful, glorious king, shooting down a loyal friend made helpless by sexual passion, he becomes a helpless, weak, blinded captive, ruined largely by his own sexual passion. The change in his condition is elegantly expressed by images of light and darkness, sight and blindness."[122]

The point I want to emphasize is that unlike Pṛthvīrāja's gradual – but also limited - heroic transformation, the story of his later descendant Hammīra took off as story of remarkable heroism *from the very start.* As I highlighted earlier, it seems that Hammīra's remembrance took a different, more positive turn right after his defeat against Alauddin Khalji. In the early fifteenth century, indeed, Hammīra's story may have been signified something quite different. Hammīra came to embody the stubborn resistance to (the expansion of) Sultanate rule, and not the start of Sultanate rule as the tale of his predecessor Pṛthvīrāja and his rival Jayacandra. This might be one of the reasons why it is the 'sattvic' Hammīra - and not sleepy Pṛthvīrāja and Jayacandra - who repeatedly emerges as an example in the many historical poems composed from the fifteenth century onwards, when local chiefs started to revolt against Sultanate rule, and (re)claim autonomy. Put differently, Hammīra's heroic story *predates* the heroic transformation of Pṛthvīrāja, which somewhat ironically seems to take off with Nayacandra's poem.

The reason why I'm mentioning all this, together with Nayacandra's indebtedness to the *prabandha* literature, is because it gives insight into the way HMK can be said to invert historical memories. Nayacandra seems to impose the more critical story or '*prabandha*-template' on his rendering of Hammīra's story, while *seemingly* restoring the remembrance of Pṛthvīrāja, who unlike the sattvic Hammīra became remembered as a 'sleepy' king from the very start, perhaps even during his life time.[123] In the third canto Nayacandra thus portrays Pṛthvīrāja, more or less, as an admirable warrior-king, a brilliant warrior who vows to give protection to those who seek refuge. Unfortunately,

[122] Pritchett 1980: 72.

[123] The critique of Pṛthvīrāja's sleepiness goes back very early. The poet Lakṣmīdhara in the colophon of his *Virudha-vidhi-vidhvaṃśa* (early 13th c.) speaks about how his grandfather Skanda served as the general in Pṛthvīrāja's army during the battle with the (Ghurid) Turks, explaining that the Śaka king defeated Pṛthvīrāja "whose mind had sunk down in the vice of sleep" (*nidrā-vyasana-sanna-dhīḥ*) (- the Sanskrit text is quoted from Sharma 1975: 86, n69.) The critique of Pṛthvīrāja's drowsiness before his final encounter with Shahabuddin seems implicit too in the two final cantos of Jayānaka's *Pṛthvīrājavijaya*, which must have been composed right before or after his fatal defeat in 1192. I plan to continue my work on this text in a later project.

some of Pṛthvīrāja's men chose to betray him, which made it easy for Shahabuddin to defeat the Chauhan king. This story line is more or less what the reader may have expected to be the case of Hammīra's story. As discussed before, Nayacandra purposefully (but audibly) leaves out the more explicit and well-known criticism about Pṛthvīrāja as an ignorant and sleepy ruler, who acted unjustly toward his loyal minister.

What seems to happen in HMK is that Nayacandra purposefully displaces the critique associated with kings like Pṛthvīrāja to his account of the main protagonist Hammīra, who was remembered much more positively at the time. Like Pṛthvīrāja in the *prabandhas,* '*sattvic*' Hammīra is portrayed as an ignorant ruler who mutilates and insults his loyal and intelligent ministers. Without any justification he blinds and castrates his intelligent minister Dharmasiṃha, "Lion Dharma". He later insults and replaces his loyal minister and half-brother Bhojadeva – perhaps a nod to the famous poet-king Bhoja of Dhar - by a man named Ratipāla, "Sex Protector". Like in the prabandha collections, the unjustly treated ministers or poets turn away from the court. And some of them become intent on avenging the injustice done to them.

Put differently, in HMK sleepy Pṛthvīrāja becomes *sattvic* Hammīra, and vice versa. But the poetic effect doesn't really come down to a purification of Pṛthvīrāja's name (the omitted elements can be felt). It seems rather the case that the poem playfully displaces the traditional elements of Pṛthvīrāja's story to that of Hammīra. In short, Nayacandra's poem seems to deliberately and playfully *invert* historical memories.

5.8 Conclusion

Nayacandra's HMK is clearly not just a political eulogy that legitimates Chauhan or Tomar rule, but rather a complex, multi-dimensional literary work, revealing a strong concern to expose the fatal self-deluding tendency of virile heroism. This doesn't mean that the poem didn't serve a political purpose. In a courtly context where prestige is gained by attracting famous poets and scholars, and defeating those from other courts, literary activity is always intertwined with the political sphere. For sure, the presentation of a prestigious Sanskrit court epic itself must have lent luster to the Tomar court. At least if we assume it was composed *for* the Tomar king, and not to 'defeat' his courtiers in a literary contest, perhaps as the representative of a Chauhan patron. I have indicated how Nayacandra seems to be purposefully ambiguous about the context of patronage. And this ambiguity fits well with the many subversive edges of HMK. Nayacandra doesn't seem to grant anyone fulsome praise, not a patron, and certainly not the heroes of his poem. In fact, he makes it clear - in his signature playful way - that he chose to compose a poem about Hammīra, out of free will (*kāmam*), nudged by the Chauhan king himself in a dream,

as it were to *retell* his life story, and in order to 'please'- or indeed tease – those kings who love heroic tales like that of the legendary Hammīra, arguably one of the most popular historical heroes of the time. In the introduction, by contrast, we learned that Nayacandra intended to purify, or indeed awaken the royal class, with his great poem of the last Chauhan king.

By paying close attention to the playful framing of the work, and by taking seriously the author's claim as to the newness of his poem, I have tried to show how HMK can be read as a subversive response to more overtly heroic presentations of Hammīra at the time. In his self-proclaimed new poem Nayacandra hollows out the traditional heroic core of Hammīra's legend and subsumes it into a much grander, deeply tragic narrative about the downfall of a famous dynastic power. Nayacandra's poem subtly builds up to an inversion of the traditional heroic core by starting with a canto (nine) that radically undermines Hammīra's selfless character. The storyline of blinding and castrating "Lion Dharma", and the deliberate postponing and hollowing out of Hammīra's heroic vow is probably unique to Nayacandra's version of the Hammīra legend. Although Nayacandra blurs the boundaries between 'good protagonist' and 'bad antagonist', a constant opposition plays out between Hammīra's blind support for virile, masculine warriors and his mistreatment of wise men. This is exemplified by the story surrounding the contrasting duo's Dharmasiṃha-Bhīmasiṃha and Bhoja-Ratipāla. We may ultimately sympathize more with the victims of Hammīra's self-defeating delusion, than with Hammīra himself and those warriors he celebrates as the paragons of virile masculinity, including the 'traditional' heroes Mahimāsāhi and Jājā. The ill-fated Bhojadeva (perhaps a nod to the king-poet Bhoja of Dhar) appears to take over the traditional role of the Mongol Mahimāsāhi, whereas Vīrama (perhaps a nod to Nayacandra's patron) takes over the centrality of the famous warrior Jājā.

Taken as a unified aesthetic whole, driven by an ambiguous thematic question about the king's relation to Royal Fortune (*rājya-śrī*), Nayacandra's poem clearly drives home his 'point' that the traditional (*kila*) idea of Hammīra as the epitome of selfless courage (*sattva*) is a highly debatable, potential delusional vision, worth questioning, rather than praising. Treason or defeat may not just befall virile rulers like Hammīra, but is rather caused by their foolish, inconsiderate acts. This is the reason why Royal Fortune abandons her royal husbands. And this is the author's own emphasis throughout HMK. [124] It's not because Hammīra blames the traitors for the downfall of his kingdom, that the author himself does so, as historians like Bednar and Sreenivasan seem to assert.[125]

[124] Verse 8.74-75, for example, part of the ominous speech of Hammīra's father, make clear that Laksṃī will abandon a king who lacks right discernment (*viveka*) and mistreats their subjects.

[125] Sreenivasan (2002: 288) and Bednar (2007: 207; 2017: 604).

While undermining and inverting the heroic core of the traditional story, Nayacandra repeatedly questions the effectiveness of valorous heroism (*vikrama*). He has his characters state so explicitly, like Ulugh Khan who says that experts on policy (*nīti*) do not praise valor (*vikrama*). HMK shows that the main heroes who take "vows of heroism" are subjected to states of delusion (*moha*), stupor and misperception.[126] Although they don't fear death, their actions appear to be driven by a fear to be shamed and blamed by future generations.[127] By contrast, the fearful but more thoughtful and skillful antagonists are said to never err or fall victim to delusion (*muhyanti*, Jalaluddin in 4.104 and Alauddin in 13.72). Unlike the fearless but sleepy protagonists, they *remember* and learn from their past defeats.[128] Interestingly, Ulugh Khan's rejection of heroic strength, resonates with the message from an earlier story about the Chauhan minister-turned-king Vāgbhaṭa, "the warrior of insight" (*pratibhā-bhaṭaḥ,* 4.94), who saved the kingdom by resorting to deceitful stratagem, instead of force. He is the only Chauhan 'king' who doesn't succumb to tragic blindness, illustrating one of the poem's defining themes, namely that wisdom or wakefulness is the only successful component for securing Royal Fortune.[129]

Arguably, Nayacandra was the first poet to deliberately, and ingeniously, model Hammīra's story on that of the sleepy and blind Pṛthvīrāja. Presumably, Nayacandra went against the stream at the time by presenting the story of Hammīra's resistance not as a heroic act of goodness or selfless courage (*sattva*), but as the extension or tragi-comic repetition of Pṛthvīrāja's less admirable sleepy kingship. In Nayacandra's zoomed-out historical 'dream-vision' the fall of Hammīra's Ranthambhor becomes a variation of the fall of Pṛthvīrāja's Ajmer. In Nayacandra's patterned vision of Chauhan history, where everything repeats itself in different variations and transformations, we may get the impression that Hammīra's resistance was potentially more stupid, *precisely* because he repeats the mistakes of his predecessors. In Nayacandra's epic Hammīra is indeed explicitly warned by his father Jaitrasiṃha to *not* start a conflict (*kali*) with the more

[126] Including Mahimāsāhi's 'heroic act' of slaying his wives and children to prove his loyalty, discussed in the previous chapter.

[127] This is made very explicit in canto three through the words of Udayarāja, an ally of Pṛthvīrāja, who reflects "If I go away, Shame will joyfully play in my *gauḍa*-clan" (*...ced vrajāmi krīḍāṃ vrīḍā kalayati tadā gauḍa-gotre sukhaṃ me,* 3.68). The obsession with future fame becomes very explicit in Hammīra's speech to his daughter, where he rebukes her arguments about the importance of protecting the kingdom, saying that a man should only acquire "fame and dharma" (*kīrtiṃ dharmaṃ ca,* 13.125). See my discussion of this episode in the previous chapter.

[128] In verse 3.53 we learn that the experience of fear resulting from his former defeat makes Shahabuddin resort to deceitful stratagem, just like Ulugh Khan' deceitful plan results from "*remembering* the fear experienced earlier" (*pūrvânubhūta-bhī-saṃsmaraṇād*, 11.19).

[129] This is also repeatedly emphasized in Jaitrasiṃha's lecture on kingship in the eighth canto (especially in v.8.80-85).

powerful Śaka king, who like Viṣṇu, operates predominantly through 'playful deceit' (*lasac-chalena,* 8.103).

Finally, we may wonder how an audience of Tomar or Chauhan royals received Nayacandra's version of Chauhan history and the shifting of power balances with the advent of Sultanate (*śaka*) rule. The Tomars, for example, may have fancied a role in the poet's grand history, or at least some verses of praise. Or perhaps there were people present who claimed descent from Pṛthvīrāja and Hammīra's famous lineage. But Nayacandra's poem seems to purposefully cancel out such perspectives. In HMK the Tomars are denied a place in the history of Chauhan rule (which is somehow presented as a history of North India) *and* he makes clear that the Chauhans of Pṛthvīrāja/Hammīra's famous branch left no heirs. Without wanting or knowing it, Hammīra ends up being remembered as the last sleepy Chauhan king - in Nayacandra's poem at least - who caused the *complete* destruction of the once illustrious Chauhan dynasty.

Chapter 6 Conclusion: Old models, new stories, great poems

6.1 Shaking movements, intertextual play and temporal depth

This study has tried to elucidate the aesthetic goals and distinct poetic character of Nayacandra Sūri's *Hammīra-mahākāvya* (HMK), a relatively well-known and much-cited specimen of historical *kāvya*. It is one of those many historical poems - belonging to a potentially larger movement of South Asian historical literature - that has attracted considerable historiographical interest in the past decades, but has remained undervalued as literature or poetry, worthy of interest in its own right. My close *literary* reading of HMK was partly conceived as an answer to a call made by acclaimed historians like Cynthia Talbot and Romila Thapar. In their historiographical work they have both addressed the need for a more fine-grained literary and comparative analysis of such complex literary works, to understand what they are "actually saying".[1] This, of course, means treating HMK, and many thematically related Rajput poems, as aesthetic objects. Reading these epic poems as literature also means playing along with the text, from beginning to end, while attempting to grasp their literary effects on the reader – many of which resist categorization in both etic and emic theoretical frameworks. Below I will recapitulate some of the most defining and striking characteristics of HMK's aesthetic. In addition, this study has tried to give insight into the cultural-historical significance of the Hammīra legend itself, which finds its first full-fledged literary expression in Nayacandra's Sanskrit epic. In recapitulating my insights, I will try to address how my close literary reading of HMK may have broader implications for our understanding of historical *kāvya* and the literary appeal of the Rajput tale itself.

[1] Thapar 2005: 130; and Talbot in her forthcoming article, which she generously shared with me.

Let me start by making explicit, once more, that this study, in the first place, has sought contribute to a recent and ongoing scholarly trend to revalidate individual works from the tradition of Sanskrit *kāvya.* Many of the contributors to the recent edited volume *Innovations and Turning Points*: *toward a history of kāvya literature* have made a strong plea for the importance of reading and rereading the great works of Sanskrit literature in order to make possible a much-needed sympathetic history of Sanskrit 'belles lettres' (*kāvya*).[2] Only by continuing such efforts it may be possible not only to rewrite and revalidate the history of South Asian literature, but also to make a stronger appeal to the 'Global Turn' in literary studies. This is another much-needed trend to counter Eurocentric perspectives on all sorts of issues pertaining to literary theory, and debates about what counts as 'World literature'.

My research was partly conceived to complicate the conclusions drawn from earlier historiographical readings of Nayacandra's epic and the Hammīra story itself, and the applied socio-political mode of analysis. I have occasionally addressed the limits of this approach to literature. Many earlier readings thus tend to classify and implicitly denounce heroic and historical poems like HMK as political, idealizing literature, sponsored to promote the ideals and values of 'Rajputizing' elites, like the fifteenth century Tomar rulers of Gwalior who may have been in need of legitimizing narratives to make claims to *kṣatriya* or Rajput status. My close literary analysis of HMK has sought to complicate this view. By paying close attention to the non-serious 'poetical chaff' – to use an earlier Orientalist vision on historical poems like Nayacandra's Hammīra poem – I have argued that the poem is deeply playful and tragic in spirit, and potentially subversive in its message.

How do we define, or make sense of playfulness and tragedy in a historical poem like HMK, which after all is indeed framed as a biographical eulogy (*carita*) and praise poem (*stavana*) about the greatest ruler of all times? How do we make sense of this profound tension or unsettling incongruity between format and content? These were some of the guiding questions in my reading of the poem, which have troubled many earlier readers of HMK. Most of them settled for downplaying the significance of the critical, unheroic parts. In concluding this dissertation I will again address this issue by elaborating on what I identified as the connection between Nayacandra's vision on poetry *as* playful movement, his concern with intertextual play, and his intention to make a new poem of Hammīra, and perhaps also new kind of Sanskrit epic, a tragic-historical poem.

HMK's profoundly playful and intertextual poetics is certainly not an isolated case in the 'late' tradition of Sanskrit poetry. In the introduction I drew attention to how Yigal Bronner and David Shulman have postulated that Sanskrit poetry in the 'vernacular

[2] Bronner et al. 2014.

millennium' is deeply concerned with effecting a kind of restless, multi-directional movement between different layers and intertextual canons.[3] Arguing against Sheldon Pollock's thesis about the dying vitality of post 1000-AD Sanskrit literature, they show that Sanskrit *kāvya* didn't lose its creative force with the emergence of vernacular literature. Rather, it continues to renew itself, through intertextual play, in a profound engagement with the poets of old *and* the new vernacular literatures. In doing so, they acquire an extraordinary temporal richness, literary complexity. I have argued that many of their observations about the new aesthetic of 'late' Sanskrit poetry in South India applies to Nayacandra's poetry. It may therefore also be the case in many other Sanskrit historical poems from North India, which remain to be read from a more literary perspective.

We have seen in chapter one how Nayacandra thematizes the interconnection between playful movement, intertextual play and innovation in one of HMK's final verses, where he addresses the context of his composition. He 'explains', while alluding to a famous verse from Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa,* that his mind was "shaken by a play of rashness" (*cāpala-keli-dolita*, 14.43) when he heard the courtiers of Vīrama Tomar proclaim that no one will make a Sanskrit poem like the poets of old. Nayacandra was playfully 'shaken' into making a new poem of king Hammīra by adopting and adapting older poetic models. I have been arguing throughout this dissertation that a restless back-and-forth movement - denoted by the conception of play (*keli*), words like *dolita* "shaken, swung", and "the multi-valent word *cāpala* "rashness, fickleness, unsteadiness, instability" - underlies Nayacandra's composition as a whole. A playful back-and-forth movement expresses itself as theme and overall poetic effect on the reader. A structural analysis of HMK as a whole shows that Nayacandra's verses repeatedly move between different perspectives, narrative modes, earlier intertextual models, and the Hammīra story itself, with occasional nods to his own historical present. Below I will further concretize these points.

I will start by recapitulating how this effects the narrative flow itself. Nayacandra typically first creates an ideal description of the protagonists as exemplary rulers, employing the stock imagery of royal panegyric, often purposefully alluding to verses from other *kāvyas*. As the panegyric mode "thickens" to an extreme, the poem shifts to a tragic mode in which we get the actualized narrative of the protagonists' kingship, cracking and sometimes reversing the formerly established spotless, idealized image.[4] The tragic turn is often announced by the indefinite (but ominous) time marker "the

[3] Bronner and Shulman 2006.

[4] The use of "thickening" is adopted from Bronner 2010, showing how in Bilhaṇa's *Vikramâṅkadevacarita* the panegyric frame sometimes "collapses under its own weight" (p. 471).

other day" (*anyadā, anyedyus*).[5] When hearing this temporal marker, the reader knows that the preceding idealization will fall apart.

One could argue, of course, that the eulogistic mode and framing renders the tragic content less tragic. This is what scholars like Michael Bednar seem to be arguing when stating that tragic-heroic plots of Rajput tales transform the protagonist's defeat into a heroic success.[6] I have tried to demonstrate that a closer reading of HMK reveals that the transformation works most powerfully in the other direction. Nayacandra *plays* with the surface story, as it were exposing the human tendency to transform humiliating defeat into a story of success. The tragic mode tends to undermine or hollow out the significance of the heroic rhetoric *and* the truth value of the Rajput perspective. The eulogistic format (and episodes of praise) and tragic content are *at play* with one another, and clearly affect each other in their tense and tenuous relationship. Idealistic descriptions thus seem to purposefully build up a tragic suspense by having the reader eagerly await the inevitable tragic turn. The eulogistic part therefore doesn't downplay the tragedy of the story, but the other way around. What follows the tragic turn undermines the grandeur of the preceding part, in which 'cracks' are subtly intimated, appearing to function as wake-up calls that signal the inevitable reversal of fortunes. It is therefore the tragic part that draws the attention, and, as it were, awakens the reader from the illusory, world of ideals. Interestingly, it is often in the 'idealizing' mode that the verses become deeply intertextual. These verses, then, are not so much about the glorious deeds of heroes, but about poetry itself.

What adds to the tragic intensity is HMK's concern with patterns and repetitions. I explained how the tragic turn in the Chauhan's history takes off with the story of 'sleepy' Pṛthvīrāja in canto three. The well-known story of his defeat - with the audible silences about the more negative side of his story - replicates itself throughout the poem. The tragic-heroic motifs introduced in the story of Pṛthvīrāja – the blindness, deafness, sleepiness, delusion, childishness, recklessness, arrogance, etc. – become more pronounced as the poem moves towards the tragic finale with the kingship of Hammīra, the last 'sleepy' Chauhan ruler. What I called a 'triumph-turned-defeat' narrative logic becomes a refrain in the poem, sounding louder and louder as we proceed through the Chauhan's meandering history, and the accompanying alternation between eulogistic and tragic modes. The same phrases and ironies – like the reversal involving Pṛthvīrāja's dancing horse Nāṭâmbhā "Beginning of Dance"- literally resonate and reverberate throughout the poem, in ever new variations. It creates a playful dynamic in the poem,

[5] Thus after v.4.2 (Harirāja), 4.48 (Prahlādana), 4.82 (Vīranārāyaṇa), and 9.76 (Hammīra).

[6] Bednar 2007 and 2017.

which repeatedly draws the reader into a fantasy world of ideals, and then pulls him out, waking him up from the illusory, timeless nature of the panegyric mode.

Inspired by Shulman's reading of *Raghuvaṃśa*, I have tried to show how and "why the poem reproduces itself so consistently, and why each episode subtly reenacts the rhythms of its predecessors."[7] I indicated in chapter three how in HMK too this might have much to do with "time's shifting power", how history repeats itself tragically (and comically) in the dangerous transfer of kingship's brilliant fortune (Śrī) from father to son.[8] But in HMK this pattern is modelled in its own, arguably, innovative and deeply ironic tragic-historical and intertextual mode. The episodes in HMK not only consistently replicate themselves in ever new variations, but purposefully sound like the episodes of many other texts. This seems to be an important feature of the Sanskrit literary tradition as a whole, as shown in Yigal Bronner's work on the poetic device (and ideal) of "simultaneous narration" (*śleṣa*) in Sanskrit *kāvya*.[9] We have seen in chapter two how the start of Pṛthvīrāja's conflict is entirely modeled on the second canto of Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava,* but with purposeful inversions. Similarly, Hammīra appears to start his career as the sleepy Aja from Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa,* but unlike Aja, the Chauhan king never truly wakes up.

The repeated resonances with Kālidāsa's poetry purposefully clash with other narrative templates which Nayacandra ingeniously blends into his version of Chauhan history, like the *prabandha* literature or the *Pañcatantra* narrative material, with its humorous elements and tragic plot lines.[10] This is not just intertextual jugglery for the sake of intertextual play, or for showing off erudition. Nayacandra embeds Hammīra story into a deep and rich intertextual conversation. I have tried to suggest that the repeated resonances and dissonances with other texts demand a new engagement and deeper involvement with the more 'popular' significance of Hammīra's story. For example, through its modelling on *Raghuvaṃśa*, Nayacandra's version of Hammīra can be read as a story about the difficulties of preserving the dynastic lineage, which ends with the tragic kingship of Hammīra. Through the repeated allusions to *Mahābhārata* imagery, especially the dice game perhaps, the story of Hammīra can be read as a variation of the tragic,

[7] Shulman 2014: 68.

[8] The use of "shifting power" is adopted from Shulman's translation of a verse from Kālidāsa's Raghuvaṃśa (ibid.).

[9] Bronner 2010. He explains how the masking device of *śleṣa*, the poetic "embrace", is used to "reflect on the nature and capacities of poetry as a heightened form of language in disguise, where the words of one poem always stand for those of another." (p.89). He explains how poets use this device to "demonstrate how the epics themselves the most important source of Sanskrit *kāvya*, consists of episodes that constantly replicate, predict, and assume one another." (p. 89).

[10] This corresponds with some of Daud Ali's observations on the mixing of narrative styles between *kathā* and *mahākāvya* in his article on resemblances between the *prabandha* literature of Western India and the *Rājataraṅginī* tradition of Kashmir (2013).

apocalyptic *Mahābhārata* war. Or through the subtext story of the Owl and the Crows, evoked by Hammīra himself (as we have seen in chapter four), HMK can said to be about the ever-rotating cycle of fortune and misfortune, peace and war, (in)justice and retaliation - and the horror it afflicts on the people. A king like Hammīra thus appears to play the role of the day-blind Owl king in *Pañcatantra.* This is another way to look at the ever-repeating triumph-turned-defeat logic.

The possibilities for interpretation, for making sense of Hammīra's tragedy, become infinite. Nayacandra's author thus plays with the same themes, symbolic imagery and effects from his intertexts, but applied to Hammīra's story they might acquire subtle, but significant differences. Therefore, to fully understand the significance of Nayacandra's intertextual play one needs to know what these other texts are about, or what their verses try to say. Nayacandra's poem goes back and forth between the verses of his own poetry – and the story of the Chauhans – and other texts. The challenge is not only to notice the nods – and thus know the intertexts - but to identify the nature of Nayacandra's intertextual play, and how it effects his rendering of Chauhan history. In some cases, Nayacandra's engagement with other textual models might border on being a parody, especially I suggested, in adopting the patron-centred epic as the format. I have tried to demonstrate this in my discussion of the over-the-top hyperbolic framing in the prologue (chapter one), the playful insertion of the 'illegitimate heir problem' and Jaitrasiṃha's fatal dream-vision episode in canto eight (chapter three), and the verse about Nayacandra's own dream-vision, in which he tells that he composed his poem *willingly* (chapter five).

Such parodic features appear to be a typical feature of *kāvya* literature - and of literature in general, of course - from its very beginning. Gary Tubb, for example, has suggested that Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava* can be read as a "parody of a parody", showing the poem's playful engagement with Aśvaghoṣa's epic poems about Buddhist themes.[11]

Although there might be religious motivations underlying Nayacandra's treatment of his heroic subject, it can be useful to read the poem as a literary work, regardless of the religious orientation of the author. I want to emphasize that Nayacandra, even though he was a Jain monk, did not intend to write a Jain poem for a Jain community or to instruct a non-Jain community with a 'Jain version' of the Hammīra legend. This doesn't mean, of course, that his identity as a Jain monk and the religious-philosophical views underlying the Jain tradition did not influence the way he presented his heroic subject. (There are often clear Jain accents.) Given my analysis of Nayacandra's poem as *Mahābhārata*-like in its tragic development or *prabandha*-like in its criticism, it is tempting to classify HMK as a *śānta rasa* (the aesthetic mood of quietism), inspiring the audience to turn away from

[11] Tubb 2014: 77.

the world, and focus on the goal of liberation (*mokṣa*).[12] This interpretation would underwrite Anne Monius' claim that Jain *kāvya*, like "all Jain narratives" ultimately intends to evoke this mood of quiescence. She calls *śānta rasa* the "Jain poetic telos".[13] Interestingly, she argues that Jain authors typically achieve this through comedy, or anti-heroic and anti-erotic comic modes, that are prevalent in Jain literature.[14]

I have shown that comic modes, as well as anti-heroic and anti-erotic modes, are clearly present in Nayacandra's HMK. But just like classifying Nayacandra's Hammīra poem as a 'heroic poem' (*vīra kāvya*) doesn't help us with interpreting the kind of heroism Nayacandra's heroes embody, so does the category 'Jain poem' with a *śānta rasa* telos doesn't really do justice to the effect created by the playful, multi-directional movements that operate throughout HMK - and never fully come to rest. Poets – regardless of their religious affiliation- seemed to have shared the idea that the experience of poetry is analogous to a religious experience, or indeed superior to it as a means to 'taste' ultimate reality.[15] In that sense we could say that Nayacandra's concern with exploring multiple, contradictory perspectives on Hammīra's tragedy may be rooted in the Jain view on the multi-faceted nature of reality (*anekāntavāda*). Nayacandra can be said to use the popular Hammīra story to give a glimpse of the way reality – manifesting itself in the tragic history of the Chauhan dynasty- can only be understood from different, often conflicting perspectives. A great poem like HMK, much more than any real-life event or more one-dimensional stories, may be capable of generating the kind of experience in which the

[12] It is worth mentioning in this regard that the prologue of HMK indeed urges the reader to turn his or her attention to *śiva-śrī,* 'auspicious Splendor', with the commentary glossing this as *mokṣa-lakṣmī* "Fortune of Liberation", explaining that the "seed" (of the poem?) is the *śānta rasa,* leading to the cessation of "thirsting" (*rasaś câtra śāntas tṛṣṇā-kṣayaṃ bījam*, commentary to the opening verse of HMK).

[13] Monius 2015: 162-3. I would still argue that Nayacandra belongs to a strand of Jain poets who didn't want to convey a 'Jain message', like one of the model poets he evokes, the Jain poet Amaracandra, as I discuss below.

[14] Cf. also Peter Flügel (2010), writing how the "core strategy of Jain narratives" consists in the "prevalence of intentionally polyvalent language usage and the technique of disguising moral teachings in the cloak of popular story motifs." (p. 371) This intended multivocality is principally typified as "the relationship between deceptive surface meaning and hidden truth" (p. 372). The surface meaning in these conversion stories is used to attract the audience, often by making use of love stories (*kāma kathā*). It interesting to note how Flügel himself quotes the apt remark by the renowned Jain scholar Jagdish Chandra Jain, that "[s]ometimes the disguise is so good ... that the moral or teaching element ... is difficult to find" (p. 374).

[15] On this point see for example Pollock (2016: 24), noting the influence of Vedāntic philosophy on Indian aesthetics; and Granoff (2014: 545), applying it to her analysis of Bilhaṇa's play Karṇasundarī, connecting it to other ""philosophical" plays that use traditional themes to explore the nature of reality" (p. 546). Bronner and Shulman (2006) have also pointed out that the kind of temporal richness in late Sanskrit *kāvya* can be employed to serve an "experiential, religious purpose" (p.22).

reader or listener may grasp, or indeed, experience the flow of life in all its confusing, whirling complexity and contradictions.

For example, as we have seen in chapter five, it is through the story of Hammīra's blindness - culminating in his moment of tragic and limited hindsight at the end of the penultimate canto - that the reader comes to fully realize the insight of the general wisdom (*arthântara-nyāsa*) of the first canto about the rejoicing, whirling Ocean, who is unaware that the fire within him will burn him up: "everyone sees the fault in another, but not in himself" (1.103). This idea might seem trivial, but it captures well the human tendency to understand (and defend) the nature of reality of truth from one's own perspective. [16]The South Asian poet(-historian) is a 'seer' who understands the interconnection of events, who sees the wider picture, and attempts to make the reader understand what he sees, wake him up, in the case of HMK, by telling a story about a tragic hero who never does.[17]

In one of her articles on the biographies of poets in the *prabandha* literature Phylis Granoff explains that the poet's 'divine' vision is a major topic in these texts, noting that omniscience or liberation (*kevala-jñāna*) is often defined as the "direct knowledge of past, future, and present."[18] This corresponds with how a contemporary reader of HMK experiences Nayacandra's poem, as a kind of extraordinary mastery of reality or time itself. Nayahaṃsa (writing a copy of HMK in 1485 CE, Firozpur) speaks of HMK as resembling the creation of ultimate reality (*sarge brahmaṇaḥ*) itself - surpassing what Kālidāsa achieved, in his assessment.[19] How does this poetic vision of reality look like? Unlike the philosopher or theorist perhaps, the poet avoids defining his vision on reality in explicit, unambiguous terms. The poet's verses seek to bring alive (*saṃjīvana*) the images and stories he describes, as poetry does, by making semantic and non-semantic features coincide into carefully crafted auditive and cognitive experiences. Through his history of the Chauhan dynasty, and its complete destruction, Nayacandra attempts to leave a deep impression of the workings of time as a most elusive, but all-pervasive, paradoxical and playful force, which has no clear characteristics (*a-lakṣya*), but clearly shapes and consumes everything in this world, as we have seen in chapter three. I have indicated that it is the poet himself who *forges* time in his poem, like the 'alchemist/yogi

[16] And it summarizes well that tragic aspect of life, the fact that we are always blind to the future, and that the patterns of the past become visible only in retrospect. But even then, as the story of Hammīra's tragedy shows, the egocentric perspective tends to cloud our vision, seeking to escape blame and personal responsibility.

[17] Cf. also the discussion of Shonaleeka Kaul (2018: 42-45) about Kalhaṇa's self-presentation as a poet-seer in his *Rājataraṅginī*, having access to the truth, referring to other examples in poetic theory.

[18] Granoff 1994: 193.

[19] In the second verse of Nayahaṃsa's colophon, at the end of the fourteenth canto.

of Time' (*kāla-yogin,* 13.145) in one of Nayacandra's own *suprabhātam* verses, deciding *how* kings will be remembered.

Ultimately, the poem may be less about the undying fame of historical heroes like Hammīra, than it is about the undying vitality of Sanskrit poetry. In the words of the copyist Nayahaṃsa, Nayacandra's poem is like a life-giving poetic elixir:

> In this world the poetry of the poet Nayacandra is a wonderful elixir (*rasāyanam*).
> When the wise savor it, master poets like Śrīharṣa come to life.
> 'A dancing style' (*lālityam*) like that of Amaracandra, and the 'twisted style' (*vakrimā*) of Śrīharṣa,
> in the poetry of Nayacandra we see the extraordinary combination of both.[20]

It is clear that Nayacandra belongs to the circle of admirers of Śrīharṣa's famous *Naiṣadhīyacarita (*late twelfth century), and its notoriously complex 'twisted' verses, which despite their learnedness were also characterized, in the words of Deven Patel, by a "magnificent nonseriousness".[21] A sixteenth-century commentator imagines Harṣa as "a hill that playfully sways in the waves of the nectar of *rasa*", comparing the movement in his verses to the mythological account of Mount Meru as the churning stick of the milky ocean.[22] Patel, drawing on centuries of commentaries, shows how his poetry embodied a new distinct, "truculent" voice that sought to "destabilize the very notions of what the *mahākāvya* genre (and *kāvya* itself) was and could become".[23] He notes that some indeed rejected his poetic endeavor, but many admired its playful and bold style, always keen on producing unexpected twists and reconfiguring conventions in unprecedented ways.

The other poet, the Jain poet Amaracandra belonging to the literary circle of Vastupāla, was also a celebrity in Nayacandra's time, a Jain poet known for his non-Jain poetry.[24] He

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[20] nayacandrakaveḥ *kāvyaṃ* rasāyanam ihâdbhutam |
santaḥ svadante jīvante śrīharṣādyāḥ kavīśvarāḥ ||3||
lālityam amarasyêva śrīharṣasyêva vakrimā |
nayacandrakaveḥ kāvye dṛṣṭaṃ lokottaraṃ dvayam ||4||
For my translation of *lālityam* as 'dancing style' I'm indebted to the apt translation of *lālitya* as dancing in a verse about the style of Daṇḍin, quoted in the introduction of *Innovation and Turning Points* (Bronner et al. 2014: 4.)

[21] Patel 2014: 22.

[22] ibid. 40

[23] ibid. 45

[24] A.K. Warder (2004: §6887), in discussing the poetry of Amaracandra Sūri, states that this poet, unlike other Jain *kavis,* avoids direct religious teaching and was capable of composing a "real epic" with his famous *Bālabhārata* (a reworking of the *Mahābhārata*), staying true to the narrative as told by Vyāsa. Given the deliberate non-Jain orientation of Nayacandra's work it might not be a coincidence that Nayacandra sees Amaracandra as an example, mentioning him three times (14.28, 14.31 and 14.46). For a discussion of Amaracandra's work, see Warder 2004: §6780-6888, who also notes (p.604) that there's a thirteenth century statue of this poet in Aṇahilapātaka.

became known as 'braid-sword' Amaracandra (also in HMK, *veṇikṛpāṇo 'maraḥ*, 14.31), referring to one of his good morning verses (*suprabhātam*). In this famous verse he describes how at dawn, the braid of a young girl appears to take the form of a swaying sword, when "churning the curd, with her restless eyes moving back and forth" (*dadhi-mathana-vilolal-lola-dṛg*).[25] Such verses may contain strong meta-poetic statements about what poetry does, as in Nayacandra's verse about his being "shaken by a play of restlessness" (*cāpala-keli-dolita*), and in many of his own good morning verses.

Nayacandra may have sought to outdo his contemporary colleagues in terms of playfulness and literary complexity. He as it were 'churns' the popular story of Hammīra into the whirling, swaying and multi-directional flow of his poetry.[26] The reader, who drinks in this flow, as the last verse tells us (14.46), is meant to experience 'Amaratā' – immortality or Amaracandra – while rolling back and forth (*vibhrama*), confusingly, on the garland of Harṣa – pleasure or Śrīharṣa.[27] The poem's last verse, or word *vibhrama,* can be said to recapitulate the meta-poetic, thematic and religious-philosophical point of the first verse, and its deep intertextual make-up. It emphasized the importance of paying attention to the eternally present principle of Śrī, that playful, restless, beautiful and beautifying Splendor, which is the "only cause behind the great rise of perpetual awareness and bliss" (*sadā-cid-ānanda-mahôdayâika-hetum*), enjoying herself, again and again, (*raṃramīti*), like the female goose – the support of Sarasvatī – in the purifying water.

A view about the timelessness of poetry's flow, which frames HMK as a whole, seems to clash with the more tragic nature of the worldly time, and its effect on the fame of kings. The brilliant fame of kings tends to darken as time progresses – a tragic tendency that is partly in the hands of poets like Nayacandra -, whereas the poets of old really continue to live on in their splendid verses, without losing their original vitality. The pre-modern reader of Nayacandra's work is clearly more interested in praising the extraordinary skills of the poet, and the poem's experiential effects, than in expressing

[25] The verse is taken from the story of Amaracandra, as told in Rājaśekhara's *Prabandhakośa* (Jinavijaya 1935: 62, verse 175), where it is written that he composed this verse in his famous *Bālabhārata*. See Granoff (1994:180-4, 189) for a translation and discussion of this story. She also (like Warder 2004: §6887) observes that Amaracandra is presented as a Jain poet who refrains from emphasizing his religious identity. The verse is also quoted in the anthology of Jalhaṇa, as noted in Warder 2004: § 6889.

[26] The imagery of poetry as an ocean-like fluid, which the poet 'churns' - like in the cosmogonic myth of the churning of the ocean (to achieve the immortality nectar) – seems to be a common motif, as in a verse from Bilhaṇa's *Karṇasundarī* (4.24), discussed and translated by Granoff 2014 (534): "Let me have by my side a skillful poet, who has studied all of the branches of knowledge with ease; who is skilled in playfully churning up the waters of the ocean of literature; who is the beloved of ornate speech, who composes a great poem or its equal every day; who is known for his unwavering eloquence and has well-conceived designs."

[27] I translated and discussed this verse in the first section of the first chapter.

admiration for the heroic achievements of the poem's (vain)glorious heroes.[28] All this clearly adds to the overall temporal richness of HMK. While modelling the entire history of the Chauhans - from its timeless origins in a mythological past, at the start of an aeon (*yuga, kalpa*), to the point of Hammīra's death in 1301, and his ongoing remembrance in the present and future - Nayacandra simultaneously brings alive the poets and intertextual models of old. There is nothing static, one-dimensional or unidirectional about Nayacandra's great poem. This poetry in movement, poetry *as* play.

6.2 Ironies and tragedies of history: the subversive side of the Hammīra story

In order to move beyond deceiving classifications of HMK as praise poetry – and thematically related works - I have proposed the label tragic-historical poetry, to stress the marked difference with the tradition of patron-centered epic, to which it has a somewhat parodic relation. It is tempting to classify HMK as a mere follow up to the tradition of patron-centered poetry, where the narrative itself is much more prone to function as a legitimizing story. I want to emphasize that it can be useful to understand tragic-historical poems like HMK as an altogether new literary movement, in which the great spread of the Hammīra story itself may have played a significant part.

I contend that the over-emphasis on functionalistic approaches to 'heroic poems' like HMK not only ignores the poem's playful nature, but downplays the deeply tragic development of the storyline. I would nevertheless agree with recent historiographical analysis that the tragic-heroic plots of poems like HMK reflect the emergence of what later becomes a Rajput warrior-ethos which glorifies heroic self-sacrifice.[29] But we need to nuance the over-generalizing idea that historical poems like HMK promote such a heroic ethos or legitimize the authority of Rajputizing elites. They might be provoking an estrangement from their ideals, in HMK's case, by presenting different, often opposing, perspectives on who or what is to blame for the tragic defeat of the Chauhans.

I have demonstrated that the tragic plot is far more interesting, complex and subversive than it is presented in the currently available religious, historiographical or

[28] This also corresponds with the commentator's assessment who classifies the protagonist (*nāyaka*) Hammīra as the "vainglorious hero" (*dhīrôddhata,* literally the hero whose "pride is firm"). He lists the characteristics of the protagonist (*nāyaka*) Hammīra as follows: brave, self-interested, deceptive, boastful, dishonest, wrathful, and proud (*śūrī matsarī māyī vikatthanaḥ chadmavān raudro 'valipto dhīrôddhataḥ*).

[29] As argued in Bednar (2007 and 2017).

socio-political readings of the HMK, which rarely go beyond the surface layer and frame. The poem only looks like a one-dimensional political eulogy if we choose to ignore the many ambiguities, paradoxical imagery, tragic ironies, and the deep symbolic – and often intertextual - significance of characters like Suratrāṇa "Sultan" (Hammīra's elder brother, the legitimate heir to the throne), the virile general Bhīmasiṃha "Lion Bhīma", the unjustly blinded and castrated Dharmasiṃha "Lion Dharma", the misfortunate 'refugee' Bhojadeva (probably a nod to the great poet-king Bhoja of Dhar) who plays the counterpart of Mahimāsāhi, Ratipāla "Protector of Pleasure" (Hammīra's favorite general), the dancing girl Dhārādevī "The Queen of Dhar", Vīrama (probably a nod to Nayacandra's Tomar patron), and many others. Some of these characters explicitly criticize the 'Rajput perspective', like Hammīra's wives and daughter who don't want to die for the sake of saving the king's sense of honor. It is only when we choose to side with Hammīra's own short-sighted perspective on his life story that the poem in which defeat is transformed into a heroic success.

To recall the idea implicit in one of the opening verses in Bilhaṇa's eleventh century historical poem, it is important to acknowledge the poet's creative and potentially subversive role in constructing historical memory.[30] Ultimately, it is the poet who decides *how* a particular king is remembered. HMK reveals a similar concern to expose the hero's delusional desire to be famous, inserting similar meta-poetic statements about the poet's superior power to decide on matters of fame and blame. In HMK this happens mostly through the story itself. A tragic hero like Hammīra fails to see what the reader is constantly aware of, namely that his pursuit of illustrious fame is not only at odds with the all-important pursuit of Royal Fortune (*rājya-śrī*) – the well-fare of the kingdom and its subjects - but that it has the effect of casting dark spots (*kalaṅka*) on his future remembrance. Kings like Pṛthvīrāja and Hammīra might indeed excel in their qualities as valorous fighters and live up to the warrior-ideal (*vīra-vrata*), but in their function as kings – as protectors of their subjects (*prajā-pāla*), and husbands to Royal Fortune – they consistently fail. In stories about tragic rulers like Pṛthvīrāja and Hammīra the boundary between fame, blame and infamy can become blurry, analogous to the moral ambiguity surrounding the protagonists and antagonists in tragic poems like HMK. A much more comparative and in-depth literary study of tragic-heroic histories like HMK is required if we want to get insight into how seemingly similar texts might in fact be playfully responding to each other, quoting each other and treating the same themes from different, opposing perspectives.

HMK's author thus clearly engages with a tradition of Hammīra stories that seems to take the veneration of this historical hero more seriously. And he was probably not alone in denouncing Hammīra's boldness as worthy of blame rather than fame. It is therefore

[30] As mentioned in the introduction, referring to the studies of Bronner (2010) and McCrea (2010).

important to treat texts like HMK - belonging more generally to the 'Hammīra tradition' or larger tradition of heroic histories - in all their specificity and identify the nature of intertextual dialogues, which might in some cases perhaps verge on being parodic. Identifying the nature of intertextual dialogues seems crucial to understand what these poems are doing, what they are "actually saying" to requote Romila Thapar's call to future scholars. Thus, the author (Narapati) Nālha of the *Vīsaladevarāsa* (c.1450) is mentioned as the bard in Bhāndau Vyas' *Hammīrāyaṇa* (1480), overseeing the tragic events.[31] Scholars have identified intertextual links between *Kānhaḍade-prabandha* (1455) and *Hammīrāyaṇa*[32] and a later *Hammīra-prabandha* (c.1518) by the Jain poet Amṛtakalaśa.[33] Given that HMK predates all these poems and that *Kānhaḍade-prabandha* appears to have borrowed from Nayacandra's poem, it is worth further exploring the idea of Nayacandra's HMK as the first extant full-fledged 'Rajput epic', without denying the fact that the tragic-historical theme itself has roots in the historical anecdotes of the earlier *prabandha* collections and the emerging bardic ballads (*rāso*), which were clearly making its way from purely oral performances to the literary realm. Indeed, many of the themes of HMK and *Kānhaḍade-prabandha* – and of Rajput literature in general - seem to be already explored in the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century *prabandha* collections of the Jains, which reveal a fascinating though poorly understood continuity with the Rajput tales that emerge in the fifteenth century, and further develop into full-fledged epics in the Mughal period. I elaborate on this point in the next (and last) section of this conclusion.

Overall, the aesthetic appeal of a work like HMK might derive precisely from the many ambiguities, twists, ironies and inversions which accompany the poet's playful engagement with a great variety of intertexts. In many of these texts registers of praise and critique seem to co-exist in an intriguing tension, as in the many patron-centered epics. Inspired by the work of Bronner and McCrea about the poetics of ambivalence in Bilhaṇa's poetry[34], I have stressed the importance of not treating this as a footnote. Interplay between opposing narrative modes may be what this poetry is all about: the critical layer might undermine the eulogistic narrative mode or format, which, I argued, is the case in HMK. Such interplay might be reflective, not only of the poet's own ambivalent attitude toward the heroic subject, but of potentially diverging and conflicting perspectives between patrons and poets regarding socio-political and heroic

[31] v. 301, p. 34 in Nahata: 1960.

[32] discussed by Sharma in Nahata 1960: 50-52.

[33] discussed by Sandesara 1965: 363-4.

[34] Bronner 2010; and McCrea 2010.

ideals.[35] Perhaps, in some cases, patrons may have also laughed at their own ideals. But not always.

Like every great tragic story, the legend of Hammīra is infused with many unsettling tensions and ambivalences pertaining to the futility of the massacre of Ranthambore and the nobility of the heroes. Was all this bloodshed necessary? Could it have been prevented? And who or what is to blame? Did Hammīra really act out of selfless courage or was he driven by sheer selfish obstinacy? We have seen in the first chapter that the main theme of HMK – Hammīra's supposed exemplarity in the present *degenerating* age of Kali- is introduced as a question, an ambiguous one about the Chauhan king's attitude towards Royal Fortune's playful gestures (*vilāsa*). A question about Hammīra's exemplarity and uniqueness drives the poem as a whole. The patterns in Hammīra's pre-history – with many nods to Hammīra's traditional story – invite the audience to rethink the nature of Hammīra's exemplarity. What kind of heroism does a tragic hero embody? And how unique is Hammīra's story? Indeed, all the (not so ideal) stories of his predecessors blend together in the story of Hammīra's kingship.

Questioning might to be a dominant mode in tragic-historical poems like HMK, inviting the reader to re-evaluate his or her own ideas about what heroism really means, how it might be connected to the human obsession with gaining enduring fame, a potentially misplaced glorification of the joy of war. In the end, many poems that are ostensibly composed to glorify the heroic, might be more subversive in effect than texts with a more overtly moralistic discourse. How more powerful the effect when the reader is first lured into seeing the past through, let's say a 'popular', more common perspective, and then becomes confronted with a twist, an unexpected change, a striking dissonance. Nayacandra's poem tries to 'strike', and potentially provoke a change of mind in the reader – something that never seems to occur in the stubborn minds of the recalcitrant, and tragically foolish heroes of Rajput literature.

Tragic story lines radically complicate the important relation between fortune and virtue, and the human craving for justice. In an ideal world virtuous conduct is rewarded with fortune, and vice versa. This is also what the logic of karma theory expounds, and it is a logic we want to see confirmed in stories. We naturally feel delight in stories where the good hero ultimately 'wins' and the wicked villain falls into misfortune. Such happy endings satisfy our craving for what is called poetic justice. Perhaps more than in real life

[35] By contrast, in more socio-politically textured readings of Rajput poems the poet's voice typically conflates with that of the patron. For example, in her article "Alauddin Khalji Remembered" (2002) Ramya Sreenivasan emphasizes that "primary issue for the poets and patrons of the Hammiramahakavyam and the Kanhadade Prabandh was the honour of the patron's lineage." (p. 296) I want to stress the importance of not confounding the hero's perspective (or the patron's vision) with the poet's vision, and be attentive to the constant interplay between perspectives within the poem, which is clearly the case in HMK, but probably too in other texts.

– because literature makes us sympathize and identify with the protagonists -we want literary heroes to get what they deserve. If the virtuous acts and conduct of the protagonists are not rewarded with fortune, and the wicked antagonist ultimately gains success, we become struck with the disturbing, unsettling feeling of injustice. This injustice might, in the end, spoil our aesthetic appreciation of the work altogether.

This is why the Chauhan heroes cannot be entirely good, and the Sultanate antagonist cannot be entirely bad. Literary characters are seen as moral agents, who implicitly instruct readers to follow their example. The aesthetic objectives of *kāvya*, as scholars like Shonaleeka Kaul emphasize, are inseparable from the didactic: "it is the combination that made *kāvya* so powerful a politico-literary phenomenon."[36] In Sanskrit poetic theory the idea about literature as a vehicle for ethical instruction reflects itself in a debate among theoreticians about the characterization of protagonist and antagonist. In an insightful article about the social and moral aesthetic of Sanskrit *kāvya* Sheldon Pollock discusses at length the position of the famous poet and king Bhoja in this debate. He explains how Bhoja's insistence on 'eliminating' faults and emending the unpleasant realities from histories reflect the dominant trend in Sanskrit *kāvya*: "In literature if not in life, as Bhoja says "It must be the good guy, not the bad guy, who wins.""[37]

In tragic-historical poetry this logic doesn't really work. It is worth comparing HMK's aesthetic with McCrea's observations on Kalhaṇa's *Rājataraṅginī* as an innovative literary experiment:

> Kalhaṇa's epic survey of Kashmiri kingship can be seen not simply as a departure from the literary norms of the mahā*kāvya*, but as a critique of, or a judgement on, literature, kingship and even the world in general. To tell the real story, the whole story—of a life, a reign, a dynasty, or a kingdom—is, almost inevitably, to tell a tragic story; one that, if we see it clearly, will fill us with a conviction of the futility of all human endeavour and lead us to turn away in despair. [38]

As in HMK, telling the real, tragic story about life, might mean to present a plot in which the Chauhan protagonists become wicked, perhaps more wicked than the antagonists, who, after all, win the game of fortune. A concern with telling the real, tragic story of life, might also explain why there are no clear or simple answers to the many troubling questions that emerge from Nayacandra's poem. Perhaps the poem's potentially subversive power lies precisely in its concern with provoking unsettling questions about blame, royal duties and personal responsibility. Nayacandra's poem puts different values, visions and norms into question, without becoming moralizing about it. Staying true to the structuring theme of confusion (*vibhrama, vilakṣa, vyākula*) and delusion (*moha*),

[36] Kaul 2018: 45.

[37] Pollock 2001: 220.

[38] McCrea 2013: 198.

Hammīra's moment of retrospective insight thus must remain somewhat 'shaky' and tragically incomplete. Unlike the reader, the Chauhan king remains blind to patterns of the past, tragically unaware that they may be remembered as fools in the future.

We could compare this to the painful hindsight (*anagnorisis*) of the prototypical Greek tragic hero, king Oedipus, who cuts out his own eyes at the tragic finale of Sophocles' play when he finally realizes the partly self-induced tragic chain. By contrast, the blind folly of Hammīra – illustrated compellingly through his foolish decision to cut out Dharmasiṃha's eyes - remains an integral part of his being.[39] What kind of example is Hammīra? In tragic storylines the boundary between empathic responses and a more comically distanced apathy can become blurry. As Adrian Poole aptly observes about the problem of tragic heroes in Western literature:

> They command *admiration,* in an old sense of the term that connotes wonder but not necessarily approval, moral or otherwise. Or to use an associated word familiar to Shakespeare and his contemporaries, they proved 'mirrors' for us to contemplate. They are exemplary, but they are not necessarily examples to follow. They are glamorous, charismatic, spectacular. But in tragedy they become a problem, not least for those around them. [40]

This observation is worth taking into account when evaluating the tragic heroism of characters like Hammīra, and perhaps the whole body of Rajput literature, which shares much of the tragic aesthetic and problematic that I have attempted to outline in this conclusion. Importantly indeed, the story of Hammīra is strikingly present in a whole range of post-fifteenth century Rajput texts, like *Kānhaḍade Prabandha* or Jayasi's influential *Padmāvat*, and many others. They sometimes explicitly ask whether we should praise or follow the example of the bold Hammīra.

A better understanding of the Hammīra story may therefore also illuminate what these texts are about. The Hammīra legend is profoundly concerned with the topic of the ethnic and cultural 'other, a topic that has been at the center of recent historiographical analysis. I have tried to push this analysis further, by highlighting how the Hammīra legend appears to revolve around two conflicting attitudes toward the 'other'. On the one hand the story line of the loyalty of the Mongol Mahimāsāhi emphasizes the possibility of close, meaningful, heartfelt relationships between the Hindu king with an ethnic and cultural other. On the other hand, Hammīra's refusal to save the kingdom by marrying off his daughter to an 'other', highlights the stubborn and fatal unwillingness of the

[39] As a point of comparison, see Shulman's insightful study (1985) on the comic and tragic transformations of kingship in South Indian literature, and their conflation, comparing it with different texts from Western tragic literature (as on p. 214-218). And Gerow (in Miller 1984), who argues that in Indian drama there is never a real alteration of character, in contrast to Western literature, where "alteration of character, involving re-evaluation and self-illumination, is, in theory, the prime source of interest." (p. 47).

[40] Poole 2005: 37-8.

Hindu/Rajput king to actually stop seeing the ethnic other as fundamentally different. A hero like Hammīra, and later Rajput heroes (modelled after him) like Kānhadade and his son Vīramde in *Kānhaḍade-prabandha*, are madly obsessed with preserving the clan purity. The ethnic other, in Hammīra's view, is an unworthy match for mixing one's blood lineage. The consequence, in Hammīra's case, is that with his kingship the once illustrious branch of the Śākambharī Chauhans perished completely. Hammīra made an end to the long line of his dynasty on the grounds of protecting an 'enemy' other, while also refusing to make an alliance with an 'enemy' other. In my reading of HMK's plot, I have tried to demonstrate how Hammīra, ultimately, becomes the 'enemy other' himself, at least from the perspective of some of his subjects who vainly urge Hammīra sue for peace.

The way Nayacandra ingeniously models a process of Hammīra's merging with the enemy 'other' – not only Mahimāsāhi, but many other characters as well – may have something to do with the fascinating irony surrounding the name of Hammīra himself. Nayacandra, the author the first 'great poem' of Hammīra, was certainly aware of the Persianate origin of our hero's own name, Hammīra, the Sanskritization of the Arabic word for chief Amīr. This title came to denote more generally a strong military commander and worthy opponent, as discussed in Finbarr Flood's book *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval 'Hindu-Muslim*, in a section called the 'Fate of Hammīra.'[41] Referring to the Hammīra legend, among other sources, he suggests that the eventual adoption of this name by Hindu kings is indicative of mutually felt sympathy between cultures. He also mentions how Romila Thapar called it one of the ironies of history that the last Chauhan ruler, celebrated among Rajputs for his heroic resistance against the Sultanate, thus carried a Persian-Arabic name.[42]

My reading not only supports such interpretations, I have tried to show that Nayacandra was aware of this irony of history, and the earlier significance of the word Hammīra as the name for the enemy other, as in the thirteenth century play *Hammīramadamardana*, "Crushing the madness of the Commander", where 'the Hammīra' is the Turkish enemy, whom the Chaulukya king Vīradhavala and the celebrated Jain minister and patron Vastupāla set out to defeat. I have noted how the opening verse of Nayacandra's HMK, where Hammīra is the hero and not the villain (at least nominally), may be alluding to the opening verse of this play.[43]Nayacandrapurposefully exploits such ironies, for example by suddenly announcing, out of the blue, that Hammīra had an older brother called Suratrāṇa, the Sanskritization of the word for Sultan, and a younger brother called Vīrama – very probably a nod to Nayacandra's patron Vīrama Tomar. His older brother Sultan – or *the Sultan* – is described as an expert in good governance (*naya*),

[41] Flood 2009: 255-259

[42] Flood 2009: 259.

[43] I briefly noted this in my discussion of the opening verses, in chapter one.

and therefore would have made a better husband to the all-important symbolic wife Royal Fortune (*rājya-śrī/lakṣmī*). But 'Suratrāṇa' is literally replaced in the narrative by the virile warrior-king Hammīra who will neglect his primary duties as a king.

Let me again emphasize the crucial importance of understanding the symbolic, allegoric, and often intertextual significance of such characters and episodes – which create stark resonances and dissonances with earlier textual models like the patron-centred poetry of Bāṇa and Bilhaṇa, or the understudied tradition of historical poetry about king Kumārapāla and Vastupāla from Western India. Nayacandra's persistent concern with playing on names – and their *nomen est omen* logic – has been overlooked in all previous studies on HMK, together with the crucial, all-important structuring theme of Royal Fortune (*rājya-śrī*), whom Hammīra ultimately replaces – *or wishes to replace* – by Heavenly Fortune (*diva-śrī*), or the Splendor of Heaven, potentially the wrong kind of Śrī.

Another irony of history, perhaps, is that Nayacandra's epic is not only the earliest, but also currently the best-known (and poorly-understood) literary expression of the Hammīra legend. This is partly the result of the early edition of the text in 1879. I have tried to demonstrate how Nayacandra is radically subversive in its treatment of the 'traditional story'. It is Nayacandra himself who *quotes* the 'heroic gist' of this story, but he literally questions its truthfulness, by introducing the celebratory status of Hammīra 'the good' (*sattva*) in the form of an ambiguous question (1.9). This meta-historic framing comes full circle at the end of the poem, where he reflects on the emergence of a wide-spread poetic tradition about Hammīra itself (14.1), again quoting what *other* 'learned men' have said about Hammīra. Yet, HMK remains the first – or at least earliest extant - full-fledged epic rendering of the Hammīra story.

6.3 A Sanskrit poem as the first Rajput epic?

A strong case can be made for my hypothesis that the Hammīra template, of which we find the first epic rendering in Nayacandra's HMK, was consciously adopted by many subsequent authors of Rajput epics, which clearly implemented Hammīra-specific narrative elements in reimagining the story of other kings. The significance of the Hammīra template is evident in at least three works post-dating Nayacandra's epic: the old-Gujarati epic *Kānhaḍade-prabandha* (1455), the Sanskrit play *Gaṅgadāsapratāpavilāsanāṭakam* (ca. 1450-1460) and the tragic Sufi romance *Padmāvat* (c. 1540). These poems have been recently studied by several scholars, who have also drawn attention to the presence of Hammīra's story in these texts – his 'example' indeed occurs

at crucial places in the narrative.[44] I have occasionally referred to parallel episodes, suggesting that Hammīra's story is given much more than referential attention in these poems. I would argue that the story of Hammīra's tragedy animates these poems as a whole, providing the narrative template itself. And this might have been the case for many other Rajput tales or epics that haven't been studied, or whose manuscripts haven't survived time – or await edition.[45]

Major elements that poets seem to have borrowed directly from the Hammīra story are these: the giving of shelter to rebellious chiefs of a superior enemy as a pretext of war; the refusal to accept any condition for establishing peace; an episode of festivities involving a dancing girl on the ramparts of the hill-fort, shot down by one of Alauddin's archers from the nearby encampment; and, perhaps most significantly, the dramatic ending involving the collective self-immolation of the women, the ritual known as *jauhar,* before their warrior-husbands rush into the battlefield in the face of certain defeat. It is important to understand that there is no indication that a *jauhar* actually occurred in the case of the history of Siwāna and Jalor (as told in *Kānhadade-prabandha*), Chittor (as told in *Padmāvat*) (or Champaner, as in the Sanskrit play about Gaṅgadāsa). Amir Khusrau for example only makes mention of the *jauhar* of Ranthambhor, probably the first recorded in history.[46] Initially, the heroic resistance of bold Hammīra stood out from the historical memory about Alauddin's conquests: in the fourteenth century he was remembered as the only king who bravely fought Alauddin. Put differently, the story of a heroic resistance culminating in *jauhar* may have been a narrative element that was originally specific to the Hammīra-story – and not to the Rajput narrative in general -, which was later adopted in the stories of other rulers.[47] These poetic works can therefore be understood as creative adaptations of Hammīra's story, of course modified to suit their own specific context, and infused with other narrative templates. It is not unlikely that the great fame of Hammīra provided an impetus for the descendants of other rulers –

[44] As in Bednar (2007) for *Kānhaḍade-prabandha*; Kapadia (2018) for *Gaṅgadāsapratāpavilāsanāṭakam,* and Behl (2016) for *Padmāvat.*

[45] For example, Nainsi's *Khyāt* seems to deliberately link the story of Jalor's fall to the story of Hammīra, see translation of Sreenivasan (2014: 93.) He tells how the Mongols Mahimasahi (Mamusah) and Mir Gabhru, first took shelter in Kanhadade's fort, but were expelled from there because of their inappropriate behavior. They went to Hammīra of Ranthambhor who gave them shelter, causing his conflict with Alauddin, and his death.

[46] As also mentioned in Bednar 2007.

[47] And it might have formed a major inspiration for later instance of *jauhar* that did occur, or the tendency in later chronicles to speak of *jauhar* taking place before Hammīra's story, like the *jauhar* of Gwalior, in the retrospective vision on Tomar history in the *Gopācālākhyāna*, discussed in Pauwels 2020. The real historic event of the *jauhar* of Ranthambhor appears to be projected back into earlier pasts, in other kingdoms.

those of Jalor or Chittor, who were also defeated by Alauddin - to refashion their histories and model it after the outlines of the Hammīra legend.

This hypothesis, of course, needs more careful consideration. A lengthy discussion of these other poems – which have attracted more scholarly attention – was beyond the scope of this dissertation. My point is that the significance of Hammīra's story for our understanding of Rajput literature can hardly be underestimated. The self-sacrificial heroism and resistance 'glorified' in Rajput literature, can be said to start in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, in tandem with the great spread of Hammīra's story. Hammīra's spirit is strikingly present in the historical poems produced from the fifteenth century onwards.

Especially telling in this regard his how the Classical Hindi poet Amrit Rai, in his *Māncarit rāso* (1585) mentions 'Bold Hammīra' (*haṭhī haṃvīra*) as one of the lost heroes of the present age, the *kaliyuga,* along with other historical heroes, like Bhoja of Dhar and Vikramāditya.[48] I have suggested that Amrit Rai seems to evoke a quasi-canonical set of heroes, exemplifying different virtues. It may be interesting to compare this to the cults of hero-worship in medieval Western-Europe– emerging at roughly the same time - which gave rise to the narrative tradition of the "nine worthy" heroes (French "*les neuf preux*", Dutch "*Neghen den besten*", German "*Neun Gute Helden*", etc.), comprising of three Jewish heroes (Jozua, David, Judas Maccabaeus), three 'pagan' heroes (Hector, Caesar, Alexander the Great), and three Christian heroes, (Artur, Charles the Great, Godfrey of Bouillon) – with local variants and parodic reworkings, for example in the countertradition of the "nine worthy women" (*les neuf preuses*).[49] My point is that bold Hammīra was similarly integral to the new, though flexible 'set' of historical heroes from the 'present time', the *kaliyuga*. Hammīra's self-sacrificial heroism and boldness would come to embody the martial ethos of Rajput culture.

For sure, many imagined Hammīra to be an unshakable man, a near-perfect warrior-king, whose example was admired by many, who desired to follow in his footsteps, and thus earn the great fame of the proud Chauhan king of Ranthambhor. I have noted how this is deliberately thematized in the fifteenth-century *Raṇamallachanda* and *Kānhaḍade-prabandha*. However, many others would question the greatness of Hammīra. Later texts like *Padmāvat* seem purposefully ambiguous about presenting Hammīra as a model. Ratansen, the ruler of Chittor, explicitly proclaims that he is not like Hammīra.

> Am I Hammīr, the lord of Ranthambhor,
> Who cut off his head an gave up his body?

[48] Quoted from Busch (2012: 312).

[49] For the "nine worthies" see Huizinga 1975 [1919]: 64. The tradition is said to have been started with the French court poem called *Les Voeux du paon* (ca. 1310 "The Vows of the Peacock").

I am Ratansen, a man of power![50]

We could say that poems like *Kānhaḍade-prabandha, Raṇamallachanda,* and *Padmāvat, attempt* to make the story of their heroes more glorious, by contrasting it with the story of the (vain)glorious Hammīra – the 'real' historical celebrity of his generation. And they do this by adopting and adapting many narrative elements that were probably – at first - specific to Hammīra's legend. Even when there's no direct reference to Hammīra's story, its great appeal and spread might have influenced the stories about many other Rajput rulers.[51] Although the Chauhan Pṛthvīrāja would become remembered as the 'Last Hindu Emperor', it is probably Hammīra who first emerged as *the* example of Rajput resistance.

My point was not to show who deserves the 'label' of being the first Rajput hero. What I have tried to hint at is that there is a clear intertextual conversation going on in tragic-historical poems about Chauhan and non-Chauhan kings, in which the famous story of Hammīra Chauhan had a formative role.

Importantly, the example set by Hammīra remains, especially in the literary imagination of poets, a profoundly ambiguous one. Perhaps the unwillingness to bow one's head betrays a more self-concerned obstinacy. Sacrificing the kingdom – and its people - for the sake of 'heroic vows' or honor may not be the right thing to do. Engaging in marriage politics with the 'other' may not be the most heroic choice, but it may be the most pragmatic one, preventing a lot of unnecessary suffering. This partly explains why a transformation took place, from an earlier prevalent idea about Hammīra's selfless courageousness (*sattva*) to a more ambiguous idea about Hammīra as the embodiment of *haṭha,* "stubbornness" or "obstinacy", which is already present in Nayacandra's epic. Hammīra 'the good' becomes stuck with the epithet of Hammīra 'the bold', whose boldness, or obstinacy takes on tragi-comic proportions in the later classical Hindi epics.

All this mixing of narrative templates makes it impossible to distil an 'original' Hammīra or Pṛthvīrāja story, one that is not affected by others. As I showed to be the case for HMK, authors purposefully and playfully incorporate narrative elements and templates that were associated with other kings, often modified to create unexpected

[50] Translation of Behl 2014: 203.

[51] For example, in the *Pṛthvīrājarāso* cycle the casus belli between Pṛthvīrāja and Shahabuddin is also presented as the Chauhan king's decision to provide shelter to the Muslim warrior Hussain, a brother of Shahabuddin, who had fallen in love with one of the Sultan's concubines, as discussed by Talbot 2016: p. 137. Such Hammīra-specific episodes turn up in many Rajput narratives, and become intertwined and modified with the narrative material from other story traditions. Perhaps the popularity of Hammīra's legend provided a stimulus to also reimagine Pṛthvīrāja's story along similar lines from the sixteenth century onwards. In this way Hammīra's earlier ancestor – remembered much more negatively at the time – could also emerge as an epitome of exemplary warriorhood (though not without losing the harsh critique of his kingship).

twists. Sleepy Pṛthvīrāja from the *prabandha* literature becomes 'courageous' Hammīra, and vice versa. In many cases the audience may have initially understood the way authors played with the templates and narrative elements from other stories, and deliberately recycled specific characters and names – like the Rajput daughter Devalladevī, or the beautiful queen Padmāvatī/Pādminī (studied by Ramya Sreenivasan)[52], or characters called Bhojadeva -, and thus 'heard' the intertextual and intercultural conversation that was going on. However, many twists may become new normative narrative elements, and further blur the distinction between story elements and the stuff comprising historical memory.

Instead of looking how the heroic ethos of *later* Rajput tales is reflected in Nayacandra's epic as in the work of Bednar, I have explored the benefits of going back in time.[53] The innovative character of Nayacandra's poem cannot be seen separately from earlier trends of historical literature, like the patron-centered historical biography (*carita*), the collections of historical prose narratives of the Jains (*prabandha*), and the emerging tradition of martial ballads (*rāso*) and other types of heroic poetry composed by bards, who composed their poetry and songs in vernacular language. It looks like Nayacandra's poem seems to blend these three distinct, and closely related genres of historical narrative into an altogether new type of poem, a Sanskrit tragic-historical court epic.

Put differently, Nayacandra's epic can be seen as the first extant 'epic' literarization – to use Pollock's terminology - of a tragic-historical story that might have circulated predominantly in oral accounts and vernacular languages.[54] This happens a generation before the pioneering role Viṣṇudās, at the same court in Tomar Gwalior, who 'vernacularized' the Sanskrit epics *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyāṇa* in the local language of Gwalior. Thus, from a literary-historical point of view, Nayacandra's Sanskrit epic can be seen as a marking a turning point in the history of North-Indian literary culture. As a Sanskrit historical poem with a tragic plot it appears to stand out from the long and flourishing history of Sanskrit poetry (*kāvya*) and its preference for 'happy endings'. Even though the work is deeply grounded in the Sanskrit literary tradition of old, Nayacandra's epic appears to have paved the way for – or at least marks a transition to - tragic-historic epics in North Indian vernacular languages like *Kānhaḍade-prabandha*, whose author may have been familiar with Nayacandra's epic.

Regarding my take on HMK's pioneering role as a tragic-historical epic, it is worth drawing attention to Allison Busch's observations about Amrit Rai's historical *kāvya Māncarit rāso* (1585) as a "pioneering example of the new poetry of history that began to

[52] Sreenivasan 2007.

[53] Bednar 2007.

[54] Pollock 2006: 309, discussing the case of fifteenth-century Gwalior.

emerge from Rajput courts in the sixteenth century".[55] Even though Busch, in another article, notes how these new traditions have roots in the early North and Western Indian genres of historical literature like the "the earlier Sanskrit poems foregrounding *vīra rasa* (the heroic sentiment)," she stresses Amrit Rai's departure from earlier literary trends.[56] For example, when discussing how his *Māncarita* (*rāso*) name-drops the "important real-life personalities from late sixteenth-century politics", she notes how this is "in a way very unfamiliar from the poetry, even the historical poetry, of earlier northern Indian literary traditions."[57] However, Nayacandra, more than a century earlier, clearly participates in this practice.[58] Because many poems remain unread, the topic of literary innovation is hard to study, together with the nature of interactions between vernacular and Sanskrit traditions.

The unprecedented popularity of poetry of historical kings, a new characteristic of post-1000 AD courtly poetry, seems to accompany a stronger self-reflexive poetic voice, as observed in Bronner's work on Bilhaṇa.[59] This critical voice is clearly audible and purposefully thematized in the *prabandha* literature and poems like HMK, and vernacular epics like *Kānhaḍade-prabandha* and *Pṛthvīrājrāso.* We could perhaps see it as an act of counterbalance. Poetry about historical kings increasingly becomes poetry about poets, who seem to purposefully insert themselves into the narrative as creative and critical agents, deciding on matters of fame and blame.

It is hoped that my close reading of HMK and the Hammīra story itself may offer new insights into the aesthetic goals of historical poetry – a far from uniform genre or literary tradition, which remains to be studied more comparatively and systematically. It may also offer new ways of looking at the multi-dimensional *literary* – rather than socio-political - significance of Rajput tales, many of which seem to be animated by the narrative template of the story of Hammīra, and his profoundly ambiguous status as a historical 'model'. Moreover, some of the novel characteristics of the new historical, vernacular Rajput poetry emerging in the sixteenth century might have had a precursor in an innovative, early fifteenth century Sanskrit epic.

Finally, as noted above, ultimately this study hopes to make an appeal to 'the Global turn' in literary studies. A more systematic study of South Asian historical literature might eventually offer interesting avenues for comparative research with the rise of historical poetry at European courts around the same time, at the dawn of the 'early-

[55] Busch 2012: 289.

[56] Busch 2014: 649.

[57] Busch 2012: 305-6.

[58] Thus, verses 13.200-5, where, out of the blue, the names of various warrior-kings are listed and praised as valiant warriors fighting at the side of Hammīra Chauhan.

[59] Bronner 2010.

modern' period, under comparable cultural-historical conditions - like the increased competition between rivalling local centers of power, the confrontation with empire building by 'other' Islamicate power formations, the emergence of vernacular literatures, cults of hero-worship etc. In her work on South Asian historical literature Cynthia Talbot has often made useful comparative remarks between both traditions, for example between the heroic histories like the *Pṛthvīrajrāso* cycle and the French *Chansons de Gestes,* and the vernacular historiographical traditions sponsored by Flemish aristocrats during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[60]

It may be illuminating, for our understanding of both traditions, to engage in comparative discussions from a more literary perspective. The "unstable equilibrium" between ridicule and praise, observed by Johan Huizinga as a defining characteristic of medieval chivalric literature, may also be dominant in the texts we now classify as Rajput literature, as I showed to be the case for HMK.[61] A major point of difference may be that many pre-modern South Asian texts, even though they also engage in the practice of vilifying the cultural and ethnic 'Turkish' other, simultaneously integrate this 'other' into indigenous cultural frameworks – as already noted by historians like Talbot and Thapar. Complicating a rhetoric of othering is clearly at the heart of the Hammīra legend, and the many later Rajput stories it inspired. Even though a broader, zoomed-out, comparative outlook comes with its own set of problems, it may at least, through contrast, offer new perspectives, new questions. Such comparisons, of course, may only prove meaningful if we continue to closely engage with the many unread and undervalued works of non-Western literary traditions.

[60] See Talbot 2016:5-7, as well as in the conclusion to her forthcoming article, which she generously shared with me, called "Turks, warriors, and conquerors: Narratives of Hindu-Muslim encounters between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries".

[61] Huizinga 1975 [1919]: 72. (quoted translated from the original Dutch).

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